

# Weathering Extremes: Climate, Colonialism, and Indigenous Resistance in the Dutch Atlantic

By

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**Weathering Extremes: Climate, Colonialism, and Indigenous  
Resistance in the Dutch Atlantic**

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## Abstract

*Weathering Extremes* demonstrates how seventeenth-century climate changes mingled with cultural, social, economic, agro-ecological, and geopolitical forces to catalyze three simultaneous, though geographically disparate, indigenous resistance movements between 1636 and 1645. In Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley, indigenous peoples deployed violent and non-violent means of resistance to confront the Dutch West India Company. This broadly interdisciplinary project utilizes natural proxy sources such as pollen samples, ice cores, and tree rings in conjunction with ethnohistorical and Dutch archival sources to reconstruct how early seventeenth-century extreme weather events catalyzed these movements. El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, volcanic eruptions, and reduced sunspot activity led to drought, heavy rain, and abnormally cold temperatures throughout the Americas. Extreme weather compounded the worst consequences of European colonialism on indigenous societies including disease epidemics, livestock destruction, and political instability. Harvest failures exacerbated the Company's financial ills, decreased cash and subsistence crop production, and led to local abuses of indigenous groups. Indigenous peoples and the Dutch West India Company responded to climate-induced situations based on culturally, politically, and geographically contingent factors. The diversity of responses in each case study illustrates how climate is only deterministic in its ability to provoke human responses: the Wappinger of New Netherland responded to climatological changes and European colonialism through direct militant confrontation; the *Tapuyas* and *Brasilianen* of Dutch Brazil reacted via shifting diplomatic allegiances and intermittent violence; and the *Caquetio* of Curaçao invoked foot-dragging, desertion, and false compliance.

This project makes several contributions to environmental, early modern Atlantic, and indigenous peoples' history. First, it draws attention to the impact of seventeenth-century climate on indigenous and Dutch interactions in the Americas. Next, it uses paleoclimatological sources to show how climate-induced vulnerabilities provoked diplomacy, negotiation, and/or conflict in colonial settings. It reverses common assumptions of indigenous dependency and demonstrates the importance of indigenous peoples, labor, and sovereignty in shaping European colonialism. Finally, it deploys an intercolonial analysis to move beyond local case-study and world-system examinations of the Dutch Atlantic to explore how the Dutch West India Company emerged as an interdependent and overlapping web of connections. This project argues that the three climatologically-induced indigenous resistance movements coincided with the Company's territorial zenith and collectively led to the Company's destabilization, 1674 bankruptcy, and eventual re-establishment as a key player in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

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Parts of several chapters were vetted at conferences both in the United States and Europe. I want to thank all those in attendance for listening, encouragement, and probing questions. I want to especially thank the New Netherland Institute in New Albany, New York for inviting me to participate in the 2014 Emerging Scholars Roundtable. There I received excellent criticism from

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## Introduction

Between 1637 and 1645, indigenous groups in Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley responded to the dual threat of climate and colonialism in three simultaneous, though geographically disparate resistance movements. These resistance movements reveal the truly mercurial relationships forged between indigenous groups and denizens of the Dutch West India Company (*Geoctroyeerde Westindische Compagnie* or WIC) in the early seventeenth-century Atlantic world. Dutch-indigenous relationships had qualities of eloquence, ingenuity, and even thievishness. They were established on the basis of negotiated commerce between land and seafaring partners. They were prone to rapid and unpredictable changes. And, finally, they were shaped by changing climatological conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Neither colonialism nor extreme weather events alone adequately explain the events of 1637 to 1645.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the forces of climate and colonialism worked together to catalyze historically-contingent events that fundamentally altered the geo-political, social, ecological, and cultural landscape of the Americas. Extreme weather events threatened Europeans and Natives alike and led each group to respond in culturally-contingent ways. Drawing connections between social, cultural, political, and climatological factors helps explain when and why colonial conflicts escalated into violent encounters. Episodic droughts, unseasonable deluges, and prolonged winters devastated indigenous and colonial food supplies alike. Facing famine and

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines mercurial as: 1) having qualities of eloquence, ingenuity, or thievishness attributed to the god Mercury (god of trade); 2) characterized by rapid and unpredictable changeableness of mood; 3) of or relating to the element mercury (as in thermometers), see: "Mercurial," *Merriam-Webster*, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mercurial>.

<sup>2</sup> The use of the term extreme weather event(s) in contradistinction to terms like weather or climate throughout the dissertation is grounded in the elastic definition of each. Weather is the condition of the atmosphere in the short-term and is usually defined in terms of temperature, precipitation, wind, and solar radiation. It is the current conditions outside right now. Climate generally refers to the average course or condition of the weather over a long period of time, typically at least ten to thirty years, in a specified region using the same measurements. Extreme weather events are anomalous, periodic, or intermittent changes in climate and can include droughts, deluges, hurricanes, and regionally atypical seasonal conditions like abnormally cold summers or warm winters.

death, both colonists and indigenous peoples deployed diplomacy, decrees, non-violent forms of resistance, and violence to protect their friends, kin, and families.

The dual threat of climate and colonialism created a context ripe for indigenous resistance and violent conflict. Extreme weather events posed a serious threat to the availability of subsistence crops. The settlement of Europeans along rivers and coasts also posed a threat to indigenous food supplies. Colonial settlements blocked indigenous peoples from sites of alternative riverine and marine food supplies used when crops failed to grow. As a result of crop failures and blocked access to alternative food supplies, indigenous peoples could fall into periods of famine conditions. Climate and colonial-induced famines then exacerbated common colonial tensions and problems. Malnourishment led to jeopardized immune systems and increased susceptibility to European diseases. Indigenous peoples, forced into servitude and labor, experienced exhaustion, malnourishment, and increased rates of sickness and death. Unfenced roaming livestock and the ongoing push for land threatened already diminished crop availability and renewed conflicts over pre-existing land disputes. And Europeans, also suffering from food shortages and famine conditions, pressured indigenous peoples to supply them with much needed calories by using threats, forced servitude, and violence.

The Dutch Republic chartered the Company in 1621 and within two years the Company had devised a “Grand Design” that laid out its ambitions for the Americas. The Company’s plans and policies shaped local Company leaders’ abilities to forge relationships with indigenous peoples and influenced how Company leaders responded to extreme weather, subsistence crises, and indigenous resistance movements. Specifically, the plan targeted Iberian possessions in North and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa. The Company’s successes and failures throughout the Atlantic drastically altered physical, political and cultural landscapes.

Part I.1 of this project examines the connections forged by the Dutch West India Company. People, goods, and ideas moved throughout vast local, regional, and global webs. Collectively, these networks tied various nodes of the Dutch Atlantic together. Company officials believed that such connections would strength their investments, but these connections also made the web increasingly fragile. If one part of the web failed, the entire enterprise could go with it.

Part I.2 dives into the global climatic changes and local extreme weather events that shook the Company's web. Between 1637 and 1645, shifting oceanic and atmospheric interactions resulted in periods of extreme weather in the form of droughts, deluges, and abnormally cold winters throughout the Americas. These abnormal weather patterns were consistent with the global phenomenon known as the Little Ice Age (roughly 1350-1750 CE). A wide-variety of local factors influenced the ability of both Europeans and indigenous peoples to respond this changing climate. The diversity of responses seen in Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley, the subject of parts II through IV, speaks to the importance of culturally-contextualized contingency and human agency.

In Dutch Brazil (1630-1654), the subject of part II, Company expansionist efforts launched in 1641 coincided with a host of extreme weather events. Unseasonably heavy rains along the northeastern coast of Brazil washed away manioc groves, drenched sugar plantations and salt mines, and pummeled Company forts and Indian mission villages (*aldeias*) occupied by *Brasilianen* natives. Later, between 1643 and 1644, droughts in the Sertão (the arid backcountry of Brazil) drove Tapuya groups to coastal regions occupied by Company forces.<sup>3</sup> The Tapuya and *Brasilianen* reacted to the combination of climate-induced famine and the Company's expansionist ambitions via shifting diplomatic allegiances and the use of intermittent violence.

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<sup>3</sup> Report of Tapuyas from the Sertão, November 16, 1644, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70; Report concerning the arrival of Tapuyas from the Sertão, November 23, 1644, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

Tensions between the Dutch and Tupi-speaking *Brasilianen* first erupted in Maranhão, the northwestern border of Dutch-controlled territories in Brazil. Dutch forces seized Fort São Luís in November of 1641 from Portuguese defenders. Wide-spread shortages of food provisions, ammunition, and soldiers across Dutch Brazil caused perpetual headaches for Company forces in Maranhão. Tensions between local Natives and the Company rose as Maranhão's Company leaders responded to supply shortages by pressuring local Natives to share subsistence crops and to work longer hours at Company salt mines and sugar plantations. Tensions grew further after the Company failed to pay promised wages to *Brasilianen* warriors from the neighboring missions in Ceará who served as auxiliary troops and then were refused their petitions to return home. The final straw came in April 1642 when a smallpox epidemic arrived that devastated the indigenous population in Maranhão and the nearby captaincy of Ceará. When Portuguese troops surreptitiously began inciting *Brasilianen* to join a revolt against Dutch occupation, many agreed to fight. On October 5, 1642, a combined force of *Brasilianen* and Portuguese troops fired the opening salvos of a revolt that led Company leaders to abandon Maranhão in April 1644. The conflict soon boiled over into neighboring Ceará despite the Company's attempt to appease Brazil's indigenous populations by issuing a proclamation of freedoms and exemptions. By the following year the indigenous resistance movements had erupted into a colony-wide Portuguese revolt against Dutch occupation known as the Planters' Revolt. Hostilities finally ended in 1654 when the Company completely withdrew from Brazil.

On Curaçao, the subject of part III, the indigenous Caquetios responded to Dutch vulnerabilities and a three-year drought between 1642 and 1645 by deploying prototypical "weapons of the weak."<sup>4</sup> Spanish slave traders began exploiting Curaçao's indigenous population

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<sup>4</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987).

in the sixteenth century and, as a result, the Native population had dwindled to approximately 400 when the Dutch seized the island in 1634. Once the Dutch solidified their control, they deported 300 “unruly” Natives who they deemed inhospitable to the Dutch and friendly to the Spanish. The Company used the remaining Caquetios as forced laborers. A few were kept near the main Dutch fort as house servants and the Company enlisted many more to wrangle the island’s Spanish-introduced livestock population. Steer, cows, sheep, and wild horses all proved valuable calorie sources during times of dearth. Forced into submission and diminished in number, the Caquetios could not overcome the well-armed Company militia through violence. Instead, they employed threats of Spanish collusion, foot-dragging, desertion, and false compliance as a means of resistance. Caquetios’ resistance proved fruitful when a three-year long drought (1642-1645) plagued the island’s European inhabitants. Company leaders feared a looming famine and the possibility that the Caquetios might alert the Spanish of the Company’s tenuous position on the island. Company leaders gave into Caquetios demands for greater freedoms and the return of a number of their kin in order to appease the Caquetios, gain access to their food supply, and prevent them from alerting and aiding the Spanish. If the Dutch had been better supplied or the island had proven more agriculturally productive, it is uncertain the Caquetios’ demands would have been so readily met, if at all.

Part IV moves away from the Caribbean and South America to the Hudson Valley. In 1609, Henry Hudson, an English sailor serving the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* or VOC), sailed up his namesake river. He claimed the region for the Dutch Republic based on first discovery despite the presence of a diverse population of Algonquin- and Iroquois-speaking groups.<sup>5</sup> It took the Dutch Republic another 12 years, mostly due to the

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<sup>5</sup> Adriaen Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, ed. Charles T. Gehring and William A. Starna, trans. Diederik Willem Goedhuys (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 2.

ongoing Dutch Revolt (1564-1644), before the States General formally incorporated the Hudson Valley into the Dutch West India Company.<sup>6</sup> Early Dutch colonists named the region New Netherland for its supposed climatic, agricultural, maritime, and mercantile similarities to the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup> New Netherland, however, proved a difficult place to reap crops regardless of what early Dutch boosters claimed about the region's ripe agricultural possibilities. As a result, at least initially, the colony attracted more traders than farmers. The arrival of traders and increased Company efforts to promote trade and settlement in the region corresponded with episodic droughts (1624-25, 1627-35, 1644-45, 1647-50, 1652-54, 1660-63) and prolonged winters (1633, 1637-38, 1641-42).<sup>8</sup> In addition to the threats extreme weather posed for the Hudson Valley's indigenous and European inhabitants, on-going inter-tribal conflicts between the Mohawk and Mahican to the north and diminished trade opportunities with the Munsee-speaking Lenape to the south also shaped the relationships between Dutch traders and indigenous peoples. New Netherland's leaders responded to extreme weather events, concomitant harvest failures, and declining trade with Lenape based on their perception of the region's changing ecological and political landscape. As the Mohawk solidified political control in the north and the Munsee's trade value diminished in the south, private traders and Company leaders shifted their priorities. Their policies shifted so as to appease the Mohawk in order to ensure steady trade. The Company decreed the Munsee had to pay a tribute either in pelts, wampum, and maize to compensate for

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<sup>6</sup> The States General (*Staten-Generaal*) was the governing body of the Dutch Republic. It began as an assembly of provincial states loyal to the Spanish Habsburg's. However, in 1576 during the Dutch Revolt, the States General rebelled against the Spanish crown. In 1579, the southern provinces agreed to return to Spanish rule. The northern provinces, united by the Union of Utrecht, continued the rebellion. The Dutch Republic began targeting Portuguese colonies in addition to Spanish colonies between 1580 and 1640 as a result of the Iberian Union – a dynastic union of crowns that united Portugal and Spain.

<sup>7</sup> Van der Donck, *Description*, 2.

<sup>8</sup> "Grid Point 267," Data Set, *North American Drought Atlas*, (2004), [http://iridl.ldeo.columbia.edu/SOURCES/.LDEO/.TRL/.NADA2004/pdsiatlashtml/pdsiwebdata/725w\\_425n\\_267.txt](http://iridl.ldeo.columbia.edu/SOURCES/.LDEO/.TRL/.NADA2004/pdsiatlashtml/pdsiwebdata/725w_425n_267.txt)

the Company's expenses in ensuring the Munsee's protection. The Munsee refused to submit. An epidemic, likely smallpox, brought devastation in 1633 that drought and a bitter winter made worse. Survivors later recounted that nine out of ten Munsee died. In addition to being numerically weakened, the cultural shock and knowledge loss led to the Munsee's continuous decline.

When Willem Kieft (1597-1647), the Company's director of New Netherland since 1638, issued a tribute demand in September of 1639, the Munsee and Wappinger formed an inter-tribal alliance and launched targeted attacks on Dutch settlements. Their attacks demoralized the Company and decreased the flow of settlers into the colony but ultimately failed to push the Company to abandon the colony. In 1644, Kieft asked Captain John Underhill, leader of the deadly Mystic Massacre against the Pequot in Connecticut in 1637, to reprise his assault, this time on the Tankiteke who resided in modern-day Stamford, Connecticut. Underhill's assault left somewhere between 600 and 700 Munsee dead. By the following year, peace treaties had been signed with nearly all warring parties. Additional conflicts associated with extreme weather erupted in the Hudson Valley over the next several decades, most notably the Peach War that occurred in 1655 and the prolonged Esopus War that lasted from 1659-1663. While New Netherland's residents succeeded in suppressing the region's indigenous populations, the conflicts ultimately weakened the Company's position in the region. When a fleet of English ships arrived off the coast of Manhattan in 1664, Peter Stuyvesant, appointed director after Kieft's controversial leadership during the conflict, signed an agreement to relinquish control of the colony. Its new English rulers moved quickly to rename the region New York.

Part V chronicles the three indigenous resistance movement's collective consequences, places the events in a global context, and offers a few lessons regarding what climate history can

teach us about today's unfolding climate crisis. The resistance movements marked a significant watershed moment in the history of the Dutch West India Company. Historian Jonathan Israel has pointed to the year 1646 as a standout year in the Dutch West India Company's history. According to Israel, after several years of declining share prices due to Portuguese competition and fissuring of the Company's hold in Brazil, the Company's "directors accepted the transformation of the Company from a trading war-machine into a non-belligerent commercial organization."<sup>9</sup> In pointing to explanations based on economic ends, however, Israel misses the subtle, yet transformative power of local social movements. Indigenous peoples, in his estimation, end up mattering less (if at all) than share prices despite the strong ties that connected them.

The Company's territorial expansion project reached a zenith in 1641 when climate-related indigenous resistance movements raised a formidable obstacle to further expansion. By 1645, the *Brasilianen* and Tapuya of Brazil had shifted their allegiances to support the Portuguese revolt against the Dutch. The Company attempted to maintain their indigenous alliances, but a failure to do so contributed to the Company's 1654 withdrawal from Brazil. In New Netherland, the Company continued to fight off indigenous attacks on dispersed agricultural communities until they were forced to cede the colony to England in 1664 (though the Dutch briefly regained control of the colony from 1673 to 1674). In contrast to the loss of Brazil and the Hudson Valley, the Company maintained control of Curaçao after placating the Caquetíos and as of 2016 the island remained a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, the Company ceased their plans to expand their Caribbean empire by 1645.

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<sup>9</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 170.



The Company's experiences between 1637 and 1645 precipitated a fundamental shift in Dutch perceptions of indigenous peoples and settlement colonialism in general. In 1674, the Company went bankrupt and was re-chartered a year later as the New or Second Dutch West India Company. The restructured Company abandoned the First Company's efforts to establish settlement colonies in the Americas, with the exceptions of Surinam (which the Company received in 1667 as a result of the Second Anglo-Dutch War) and Sint Marteen (which the Spanish abandoned after the Dutch Revolt and the Dutch regained in 1648), and focused instead on maintaining the Netherlands' remaining colonies including Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Euastatius, and Saba in the Caribbean and Berbice, Essequibo, Demerara, Pomeroon in South America. The Second Company insisted on using those islands, most notably Curaçao, as part of their growing influence in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>10</sup> The threat and heavy tolls associated with negotiating with the indigenous peoples contributed to the Company's reconfiguration.

*Weathering Extremes* contributes to three historiographies: environmental history, ethnohistory, and Atlantic World history. The boundaries between these fields, as evidenced by the most recent scholarship coming out of each, are fluid and porous. In analyzing the increasingly globalized world of the seventeenth century what becomes increasingly clear is that strict historiographical boundaries – whether geographic or thematic – do more to obfuscate the complexity of the past than bring clarity to its constantly changing social, economic, political, and environmental dynamics. Placing an environmental and climatological interpretation of the case studies presented into conversation with other interpretative frameworks brings clarity to the yet-examined connections between conflict, climate, and colonialism in the Dutch Atlantic.

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<sup>10</sup> Gerrit Knaap, Henk den Heijer, and Michiel de Jong, *Oorlogen Overzee: Militair Optreden Door Compagnie En Staat Buiten Europa, 1595-1814* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Boom, 2015), 280-281.

As a work of climate history, *Weathering Extremes* strives to answer three interconnected questions.<sup>11</sup> First, what was the climatological context of the region and period under study? What was happening with the climate both on average and in the short-term? Were long-term abnormalities or short-term extreme weather events occurring? Or was the climate and weather stable and average? Answering these questions requires archival and natural sources. Climate historians have looked to artwork, paintings, diaries, and correspondences as well as records for grape harvests, religious ceremonies, indigenous petitions, and Nile floods to build climate reconstructions. Yet, traditional historical observations and references to weather events need to be corroborated with less biased sources. A colonist might passingly refer to the worst winter in the last ten years, but this type of observation is subject to observer bias and unreliable cultural memory. To better contextualize first-person weather reports, historical climatologists are working to create ever-more reliable climate reconstructions using proxy sources such as tree

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<sup>11</sup> Environmental and climate history are relatively young disciplines. While each has antecedents in classic texts, the generally recognized foundational works of each field, such as Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy* and Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's *Times of Feast, Times of Famine*, respectively, tend to date to the 1970s, see: Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* (San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books, 1977); Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate Since the Year 1000* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971). Despite the two fields' proximate ages, environmental history has attracted far more acolytes than climate history. As such, climate history has generally assumed a place as a subfield within the general field of environmental history. However, in recent years climate history has seen a surge of interest as a result of the growing threat of global climate change. While a "climate history association" does not yet exist, the subfield has made in-roads to establish its interpretative importance. Small, thematic conferences have been convened, climate history panels have been assembled at national and international conferences, special thematic issues of top flagship journals have been dedicated to climate history research, and a growing online network has moved to consolidate interest. There is no agreed-upon definition of climate history and climate historians have examined the subject through a variety of temporal, geographic, and thematic lenses. Some are focused on the intellectual roots of climate and examine how climate as a scientific and cultural construction has been used and abused. Others are more concerned with the materiality of climate such as the ways in which climate shapes the human experience and vice versa. Still others are devoted to using written archival sources to reconstruct past climates. Temporally, climate historians have examined everything from short-term extreme weather events to centuries-long climate changes while, geographically, studies range from global to regional in focus. For one of the most recent overviews of climate history, see: Mark Carey, "Climate and History: A Critical Review of Historical Climatology and Climate Change Historiography," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 3, no. 3 (May 2012): 233–49. As a sign of the field's growing acceptance, two academic journals have recently dedicated issues to climate history, see: Mark Carey et al., "Forum: Climate Change and Environmental History," *Environmental History* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 282–364; "The Little Ice Age: Climate and History Reconsidered," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 44, no. 3 (Winter 2014): 301–68.

rings, pollen samples, ice cores, speleothems (stalagmites and stalactites found in caves), and coral reefs. While constantly-improving methods and practices have increased the reliability of these sources, they are still prone to sampling and statistical errors. The most reliable indication of past climates exists where archival and natural sources correspond.

Secondly, each chapter analyzes contemporary observers' awareness of their own climatological surroundings. Did contemporaries notice changes in weather or climate, and if so, how did they understand those changes? What did they see as the causes of extreme weather events, natural disasters, or abnormal climatic periods? Were droughts or deluges divine retribution for sinful practices? Were hurricanes, typhoons, and other natural disasters eschatological warnings of the end-of-days? Or, were these events simply the product of natural forces? An historical answer to these questions is typically easier for societies with written records. Extensive scholarship on the Little Ice Age in Europe has revealed the shifting understanding of natural disasters away from divine retribution towards a scientific analysis of natural phenomenon concomitant with the Scientific Revolution. For indigenous societies in the Americas, the answers to these questions becomes more difficult. I have leaned heavily on ethnohistorical methods to answer questions regarding the attitudes and perspectives of indigenous groups. These methods often involved side-streaming – using information from one group to gain insights into other, culturally-related groups – or up-streaming – working retroactively using ethnographic information from the same cultural group, but from later periods. In these cases, I have tried to indicate the source and time period of this information.

Thirdly, *Weathering Extremes* focuses on how people and populations responded to climate-related phenomenon and how and why these responses might have changed over time. Human responses to extreme weather could be shaped by a number of factors including political

and physical geography, past experiences, individual temperament, institutional policies and practices, and constraints imposed by extreme weather. Several concepts have emerged to categorize and assess societal responses to climatic events including: vulnerability, resilience, adaptive capacity, and transformability.<sup>12</sup> Social groups' capacities to respond to changing climates and extreme weather events along with their unique cultural attributes influenced the ways in which they ultimately chose to respond. The wide variety of responses outlined in each case study and the ways in which colonialism influenced these responses points to the contingent impact of climate on societies. Some groups changed their subsistence practices and strategies to meet the demands of a changed ecosystem. Others responded through more violent and militaristic means in order to steal from or solidify control over nearby food supplies. And, still others required complete cultural transformations in order to adapt to an altered context created by the dual-threat of climate and colonialism.

Scholars have explored the relationship between climate and human history in a variety of time periods and places stretching from before the Roman Empire to the present. However, this dissertation contributes to two specific debates within the expanding field of climate history. First, it contributes to scholarship on the Little Ice Age (~1350-1800). Secondly, it contributes to understandings about the impact of El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events on human history.

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<sup>12</sup> Vulnerability suggests a society is at risk of climate-related disturbances. Societies that lived on the edge of their environment's carrying capacity or who relied predominately on a single source of food might be classified as vulnerable populations. Resilience has been defined as "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks." Adaptive capacity or adaptability is the ability of actors to influence or manage resilience or to enact resilience strategies. Transformability is the ability of a society to "create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social structures make the existing system untenable," see, Georgina H. Endfield, "Exploring Particularity: Vulnerability, Resilience, and Memory in Climate Change Discourses," *Environmental History* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 303–9. For definitions, see Brian Walker et al., "Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social–Ecological Systems," *Ecology and Society* 9, no. 2 (2004): 5.

The Little Ice Age provided fertile ground for the earliest climate histories including Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie's classic *Times of Feast, Times of Famine* and the work of Christian Pfister.<sup>13</sup> These works argued that abnormally cold climate wreaked havoc on Europe's agriculturally-based economies. Scholars of the Dutch Republic, however, offered a counter-thesis. While the Dutch Republic might have experienced similarly abnormal cold temperatures during this period, it also experienced a Golden Age.<sup>14</sup> In some respects, the Dutch Republic was the great beneficiary of the age's troubles when compared to other European powers. It escaped the seventeenth century relatively unscathed by the ills of harvest failures and warfare and emerged as a successful and independent state after an 80-year revolt against the Spanish empire (1568-1648). Arguments for Dutch exceptionalism and resilience during the Little Ice Age point to the Republic's strong Baltic grain trade that dated to the late fifteenth century and sheltered Netherlanders from climate-related harvest failures, an influx of wealth that poured into the Netherlands' northern cities (most notably Amsterdam) following the Sack of Antwerp (1576), and trade embargoes with Spain (1585-1590; 1598-1609; 1621-1647) that fueled investment in overseas expansion.<sup>15</sup> Together, these events financed the Dutch Golden Age; Johannes Vermeer's and Frans Hals' portraits; Hendrick Avercamp and Pieter Saenredam's landscape paintings; and naval expeditions led by maritime heroes like Michiel de Ruyter and Piet Hein.

Historians such as Dagomar Degroot have complicated the Dutch Republic's relationship to the Little Ice Age. While the Baltic grain trade did insulate the Republic from some of the age's worst effects, Degroot argues that storms, floods, and ice had noticeable impacts on the

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<sup>13</sup> Ladurie, *Times of Feast*; Christian Pfister, "Climate and Economy in Eighteenth-Century Switzerland," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 2 (1978): 223-43.

<sup>14</sup> Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 1-11.

<sup>15</sup> Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195-210, 350-376, 396-402.

strength of the trade. The Baltic trade stagnated as a result of increased frequency of storms and prolonged presence of sea ice in which ships found themselves stuck on multiple occasions. Climate-induced food shortages in the Republic, in other words, could not always be reliably supplemented by imported Baltic grain. Yet, the Republic could still benefit from Baltic delays by leveraging its position as a middleman in the bulk trade.<sup>16</sup>

*Weathering Extremes* contributes to the critique of seventeenth-century Dutch exceptionalism. The attention devoted to the Republic's domestic resiliency during the Little Ice Age has at times overshadowed the troubled waters of its overseas investments that were battered by extreme weather events and indigenous resistance movements. I complement Degroot's skepticism by contending that the impacts of climate-induced ecological change on Dutch colonial outposts paints a drastically different picture of the Dutch Golden Age. In the Americas, ecological changes wrought by climatic fluctuations mingled with colonial policies to threatened the Company.

Focusing on climate history in the Americas helps fill a glaring gap in climate history. The earliest works of climate history were distinctly European in their focus, mostly due to the relative availability of both human and natural archival material specific to Europe. In recent years, as proxy data for non-European locales has increased, climate historians have begun to reconstruct globally-oriented histories of climate. Yet, there still remains unexplored questions regarding the Little Ice Age's impact on European colonization in the Americas. In *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, Geoffrey Parker examines the global fate of humanity during the so-called "General Crisis" of the seventeenth

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<sup>16</sup> Dagomar Degroot, "The Frigid Golden Age: Experiencing Climate Change in the Dutch Republic, 1560-1720" (PhD Diss, York University, 2014), ch. 3.

century.<sup>17</sup> While Parker emphasizes that unprecedented violence during the seventeenth century was a global phenomenon, he concluded that the impact of global cooling in the Americas “remains obscure.”<sup>18</sup> Yet, colonial America is ripe for additional research that can take advantage of colonial records, proxy records, and climate reconstructions.<sup>19</sup>

This dissertation adds to a burgeoning interest in the Little Ice Age’s impact on European colonialism by examining how peoples in places touched by Dutch overseas expansion responded to climate and colonialism.<sup>20</sup> Georgina Endfield spearheaded this endeavor in her investigation into the intersection of climatic change and society in colonial Mexico. Endfield proves how important it is to pay nuanced attention to societal process such as demography, economics, and politics in examining these relationships. Endfield concludes that the mingling of climatic change, European colonial policies, and pre-existing indigenous worldviews led to broadly disparate sets of responses to a changing world.<sup>21</sup> Individuals in the Americas experienced the Little Ice Age in slightly different ways than individuals in Europe. Whereas Europe experienced temperatures approximately a half to one-and-a-half degree Celsius below normal on average, the Americas experienced not only colder winters and cooler summers, but

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<sup>17</sup> For an introduction to the General Crisis of the seventeenth century, see: Jack A Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 445.

<sup>19</sup> Christian Pfister, “The Vulnerability of Past Societies to Climatic Variation: A New Focus for Historical Climatology in the Twenty-First Century,” *Climatic Change* 100, no. 1 (May 1, 2010): 25–31.

<sup>20</sup> Environmental historians have contributed excellent works to the relationship between nature and colonialism. The classic works include Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003); Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Georgina Endfield, *Climate and Society in Colonial Mexico: A Study in Vulnerability* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008).

also periodically long, dry conditions. This distinction has led some to substitute the term Little Drought Age to describe this period in the Americas.<sup>22</sup>

Peripheral zones and colonial regions are especially fruitful locations to examine climate history. Alan Mikhail, a leading authority on climate and the Ottoman Empire, argues and I concur that extreme weather events have the potential to create vulnerabilities and opportunities in peripheral zones where central authorities maintained a tenuous hold. According to Mikhail, the 1783/84 eruption of Iceland's Laki volcano contributed to reduced Nile floods, harvest failures, plague epidemics, and the emergence of local Egyptian elites who exerted independence from the central power of the Ottoman. Collectively, these events catalyzed Egypt's transition towards semi-independence by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The geographical distance between Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland from the Netherlands offers interesting case studies to build upon the questions of peripheral vulnerability raised by Mikhail. This dissertation demonstrates that the inability of the Dutch West India Company to resupply its colonies due to financial constraints and geographic distance made the Company's colonies vulnerable to extreme weather and indigenous resistance.<sup>24</sup>

Sherry Johnson has proposed using transition periods when climate shifts from one norm to another, known as pivot phases, to identify particularly fruitful time periods for climate histories. Extreme weather events can become increasingly prevalent during pivot phases and can be a "catalyst for historical processes."<sup>25</sup> Zooming in on peoples and regions that experienced pivot

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<sup>22</sup> Georgina H. Endfield and Sarah L. O'Hara, "Conflicts Over Water in the 'The Little Drought Age' in Central Mexico," *Environment and History* 3 (1997): 255–72.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Mikhail, "Ottoman Iceland: A Climate History," *Environmental History* 20 (2015): 262–84, doi:10.1093/envhis/emv006, 271-273.

<sup>24</sup> Sam White has identified similar difficulties with colonial provisioning in his study of the Ottoman Empire's collapse in the early seventeenth century, see: Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Sherry Johnson, "When Good Climates Go Bad: Pivot Phases, Extreme Events, and the Opportunities for Climate History," *Environmental History* 19, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 329–37.



phases allows climate historians to highlight the importance of human contingency in responding to extreme weather. Johnson proves the need for careful analysis of societal responses during pivot phases in her brief, yet insightful examination of extreme weather conditions in English Carolina and Spanish Florida in the late 1730s. The 1630s and 1640s offer another pivot phase in climate history.

The 1630s and 1640s experienced turbulent variability in El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events. As such, *Weathering Extremes* adds to a growing literature that seeks to examine the impact of ENSO events on human history. In 2001, two foundational climate histories of El Niño were published. César N. Caviedes's *El Niño in History: Storming Through the Ages* was, according to the author, "the first comprehensive account of the history of El Niño that shifts the research focus from the physical mechanisms of the phenomenon to its past and present impact on humans."<sup>26</sup> As an early contribution to a burgeoning field, Caviedes's work identified possible connections between ENSO events and human history. His observations stretched from Napoleon's siege of Moscow in 1812 to the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942 to centuries of drought in Sahelian Africa, northeast Brazil, and India. Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* took a narrower geographic and temporal focus to explore the Third World's vulnerabilities to the El Niño drought-induced famines between 1876 and 1878 that left millions dead in China, India, and Brazil.<sup>27</sup> His work is not a case of environmental determinism, however. Davis judged harshly Europeans driven to these regions as well as Africa during the Age of New Imperialism (1888-1902). In his estimation, while Western powers were capable of responding to these crises in helpful ways, they instead leveraged their

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<sup>26</sup> César Caviedes, *El Niño in History: Storming Through the Ages* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London and New York: Verso, 2001).

lofty ideals based on free trade liberalism to justify the exportation of life-saving crops back to Europe. Thus, El Niño droughts alone did not that kill millions in India, China, and Brazil, but rather the policies of Western capitalists. ENSO events in the 1630s and 1640s similarly did not determine the fate of European and Native encounters. Rather, Native and Europeans responded in culturally-contingent ways to deteriorating environmental conditions.

The causes of historical droughts are complex, but ENSO events are one of their leading causes in many regions of the world. As such, they have proved attractive to climate historians. Most early histories of ENSO events were based on archival material calibrated with one of two early El Niño chronologies, either one created by William Quinn in 1987 or an improved and revised chronology by Quinn and Neal published in 1992.<sup>28</sup> These early chronologies were based primarily on hydrological phenomenon in Peru and Egypt. As new climate data has become available, calls for reevaluation and revision of Quinn's work have grown.<sup>29</sup> In 2009, Joëlle L. Gergis and Anthony M. Fowler published an updated and more refined chronology of El Niño events since 1525 CE based on multiple proxy records.<sup>30</sup> Though this new chronology contradicts previous chronologies and is subject to criticism as well, it provides the most up-to-date, methodological sophisticated, and nuanced analysis.

In 2011, building on the updated ENSO chronologies of Fowler and Gergis, Sherry Johnson published *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of*

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<sup>28</sup> For an example of a work that relied upon Quinn's 1987 chronology, see: Richard Grove and John Chappell, eds., *El Niño: History and Crisis* (Cambridge, UK: White Horse Press, 2000). William Quinn, "El Nino Occurrences over the Past Four and a Half Centuries," *Journal of Geophysical Research* 92, no. C13 (1987): 14449–63; William Quinn, "A Study of Southern Oscillation-Related Climatic Activity for AD 622-1900 Incorporating Nile River Flood Data," in *El Niño: Historical and Paleoclimate Aspects of the Southern Oscillation*, ed. H. Diaz and V. Markgraf (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Luc Ortlieb, "The Documented Historical Record of El Niño Events in Peru: An Update of the Quinn Record (Sixteenth through Nineteenth Centuries)," in *El Niño and the Southern Oscillation: Multiscale Variability and Global and Regional Impacts*, ed. Henry F. Diaz and Vera Markgraf (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 210-211.

<sup>30</sup> Joëlle L. Gergis and Anthony M. Fowler, "A History of ENSO Events Since A.D. 1525: Implications for Future Climate Change," *Climatic Change* 92, no. 3–4 (February 2009): 371.

*Revolution* and swung the pendulum of environmental determinism back away from Davis's focus on human responses.<sup>31</sup> Johnson contended that the United States' War of Independence, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution, "events that have been attributed to political, economic, and/or social forces were impacted by, and often caused by, weather-induced environmental crises."<sup>32</sup> Johnson provided a reasonable argument for the role of droughts and hurricanes in shaping these events, but stretched the importance of weather in ultimately forcing the outcome of events. Where Davis might be criticized for underplaying the role of extreme weather, Johnson overplayed it. My ambition is to find a moderated position between the two where climate and weather neither loses nor overwhelms its role in history.

As the works of Caviedes, Davis, and Johnson suggest, the historiography of ENSO events has primarily been concerned with El Niño, ENSO's warm phase, and to a large extent has ignored El Niño's sister event, La Niña (ENSO cold phase).<sup>33</sup> This has been especially true for northeastern Brazil. Yet, both El Niño and La Niña events led to drought and intense rains in different regions, intensities, and years. In other words, La Niña events also have historical importance. As climate reconstructions become more sophisticated and refined, historians should examine the impact of reconstructed La Niña events on human history in more depth.

Extreme weather has the potential to play an influential role in history by creating unstable social conditions.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, famines have long been recognized as "engines of historical

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<sup>31</sup> Sherry Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Caviedes devotes an entire chapter to La Niña, but the bulk of his work is devoted to an examination of El Niño's role, specifically, see: Caviedes, *El Niño in History*, 146-171.

<sup>34</sup> The connection between droughts and famines has been perceived as a primary driver of such instability. The popular works of Jared Diamond, Brian Fagan, and others have created an association between drought and societal collapse, see: Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005). In the Americas, Fagan relied upon a host of historical climatology research to attribute the collapse of the Maya, Moche, and Ancestral Pueblo to prolonged periods of drought, see: Brian M. Fagan, *Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 143-168. New climate research in the southern Levant has suggested that a drought episode between 1250-1100 BCE could be responsible

transformation.”<sup>35</sup> B.J. Barickman, in his examination of subsistence production in the *Recôncavo* region of Bahia, Brazil, argues for the importance of food scarcity in understanding the history of rebellion.<sup>36</sup> Yet, the connection between climate change, famine, and violence has been subject to increased scrutiny. Specifically, historians have challenged the tendency to see a predetermined connection or causal mechanism between climate change, famine events, and rebellion. These recent critiques state that famine events do not necessarily go “hand-in-hand with climatic changes and anomalies.”<sup>37</sup> Such a causal relationship is and should be prone to critiques of environmental determinism. If such a causal mechanism was at work, one would expect famine to always follow climatic shifts. Of course, that is not the case. Deploying a two-prong explanation of famines that examines both internal/endogenous and external/exogenous mechanisms provides a more holistic and accurate explanation of such events.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the seventeenth-century Dutch Atlantic, diverse factors were at play. The Dutch West India Company

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for the collapse of Late Bronze Age civilizations, see: Dafna Langgut, Israel Finkelstein, and Thomas Litt, “Climate and the Late Bronze Age Collapse: New Evidence from the Southern Levant,” *Tel Aviv* 40 (2013): 149–75. Drought, however, is not the only extreme weather event associated with societal collapse nor does it deterministically presage collapse. The decline of the Greenland Norse by the fifteenth century has correlated to a cooling climate that blocked Norse sea passages, relocated key fishing holes, and wreaked havoc on agriculture. Climate reconstructions for Eurasia based on tree-ring samples from the Russian Altai and European Alps has correlated societal disruptions in Europe and Asia with a prolonged cooling episode from 536 to about 660 CE. The authors of this study identify the period as the “Late Antique Little Ice Age” and suggest colder temperatures contributed to “the establishment of the Justinian plague, transformation of the eastern Roman Empire and collapse of the Sasanian Empire, movements out of the Asian steppe and Arabian Peninsula, spread of Slavic-speaking peoples and political upheavals in China,” see: Ulf Büntgen et al., “Cooling and Societal Change during the Late Antique Little Ice Age from 536 to around 660 AD,” *Nature Geoscience* 9, no. 3 (March 2016): 231–36. For alternative perspectives on societal collapse that stress resilience see: Patricia A. McAnany and Norman Yoffee, eds., *Questioning Collapse: Human Resilience, Ecological Vulnerability, and the Aftermath of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Karl W. Butzer and Georgina H. Endfield, “Critical Perspectives on Historical Collapse,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109, no. 10 (March 6, 2012): 3628–31; Brian Walker et al., “Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability.”

<sup>35</sup> David Arnold, *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), quoted in Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> B.J. Barickman, *A Bahian Counterpoint: Sugar, Tobacco, Cassava, and Slavery in the Recôncavo, 1780-1860* (Stanford: California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 77.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Slavin, “Climate and Famines: A Historical Reassessment,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 7, no. 3 (May 1, 2016): 433–47.

<sup>38</sup> Tim Newfield and Inga Labuhn, “Towards a Messy History of Crisis and Climate in Carolingian Europe,” *HistoricalClimatology.com*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.historicalclimatology.com/1/post/2016/11/towards-a-messy-history-of-dearth-and-climate-in-carolingian-europe.html>.

suffered from internal economic hurdles and disagreements as well as external climatic concerns and diplomatic obstacles. A thorough examination of all contributing factors provides a less deterministic and more accurate understanding of the connections between climate, indigenous resistance, colonial violence, and the Company's 1674 bankruptcy.

Global climate events manifested themselves in diverse, regional, and at times incredibly localized ways. The diverse ways in which climate manifests itself is equal only to the diverse ways in which humans could and have responded. Local perspectives can provide nuanced understanding to the interplay between climate change and human responses by demonstrating the roles of adaptation, vulnerability, and resilience that can be overshadowed in larger, global histories of climate change.<sup>39</sup> The three case studies of this dissertation draw attention to the need for local perspectives on global events and illustrate the diverse paths of response. Recognizing the diversity of societal responses to extreme weather not only complicates questions of environmental or climatic determinism, but also provides a more holistic understanding of historical change. Indigenous resistance, colonial violence, and history in general are complex and often multi-causal events. Just as economics, politics, and culture matter in shaping history, so do climate and extreme weather. In this dissertation, my contention is not that climate matters more than culture but rather that each is but one of many causative agents in human history. Put simply, extreme weather *and* people matter in the history of Dutch-indigenous relations in the Americas.

Connections between environmental and indigenous peoples history during the colonial period were forged early on in environmental history's inchoate years and important work

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<sup>39</sup> Sherry Johnson, "When Good Climates Go Bad," 304-305.

continues at the intersection of these fields.<sup>40</sup> Climate history, however, has not always been a welcomed contribution to the fields. Indeed, arguing for climate's role as a causal agent is often met with skepticism. David Nichols reinforced such skepticism in a recent blog post in which he argued that while climate might have influenced seventeenth-century European events, the "internecine strife in eastern North America," including the slaving wars of the Iroquois, Cherokee, and Chickasaw, were "a second-order consequence of European invasion rather than of climatic stress."<sup>41</sup> Nichols' critiques reveal the need for additional examinations into how climate shaped European and indigenous relationships in early America as well as how these relationships affected pre-existing inter-tribal conflicts.

Katherine A. Grandjean began to fill the gap between climate history and indigenous peoples history in her 2011 article "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War." Grandjean argued that the Pequot War was partially caused by a 1635 hurricane that destroyed that year's crops and then an abnormally cold winter that caused crops to fail and cattle to perish.<sup>42</sup> While Grandjean does not position her argument within the larger historiography of climate history, she is clearly making contributions to the field. As Grandjean's work demonstrates, climatic frameworks can offer new insights into old questions. Climate history can also complicate new arguments. For example, Virginia Anderson's compelling work *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* demonstrates the ecologically destructive nature of colonial livestock and the potentially conflict-inducing consequences of allowing pigs and cows to roam free and trample indigenous

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<sup>40</sup> Two classic and defining works include William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983); Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.

<sup>41</sup> David Nichols, "Slightly Vaster Early America," *H-AmIndian, The Turtle Islander Examiner*, May 8, 2016, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/2718/blog/turtle-island-examiner/123927/slightly-vaster-early-america>.

<sup>42</sup> Katherine A. Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 75–100.

agricultural plots.<sup>43</sup> *Weathering Extremes* builds a bridge between the work of Grandjean and Anderson. The destruction wrought by extreme weather events like Grandjean's 1635 hurricane had the potential to exacerbate the tensions caused by Anderson's domestic livestock. Additionally, extreme weather events had the powerful potential to create famine conditions that could weaken indigenous peoples' immune systems in the face of epidemic diseases. The accumulation of ecological destruction and climate-induced famines created tense situations that if handled poorly could erupt in episodes of colonial violence.

Colonial violence was not inevitable but rather a final resort. Richard White's *The Middle Ground* challenged a singular focus on colonial violence by encouraging historians to examine themes of diplomacy, negotiation, cultural accommodation, acculturation, and cultural persistence in the context and aftermath of European colonization. Company leaders in the Dutch Atlantic often evoked processes of negotiation and diplomacy, but the threat of violence remained a constant reality and, perhaps more than hopes of peace, the fear of violence informed everyday decisions of cultural interaction.<sup>44</sup>

Narratives of violent encounters between the Dutch West India Company and indigenous peoples have emerged alongside the literature's growing emphasis on colonial violence.<sup>45</sup> Central to this dissertation is not only the attention paid to colonial violence, but explanations for violence. Evan Haefeli began his examination of violence during Kieft's War (1640-1645) in

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*.

<sup>44</sup> For example, see: Tom Arne Midtrød, *The Memory of All Ancient Customs: Native American Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012); and Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993). For the role of negotiation and diplomacy in other regions, see: Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); and James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

<sup>45</sup> For examples of renewed emphasis on colonial violence, see: Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008); and Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

New Netherland by recognizing that “violence is not just a random or inhuman act...but can also be a vivid expression of cultural values...conditioned by a group’s history, cultural, and social structure.” While many Dutch colonists openly opposed the conflict, Willem Kieft, the war’s chief perpetrator and namesake proponent, fiercely defended violent acts. But what were the causes of so much bloodshed? In Haefeli’s estimation, “economics was the proximate cause” of the conflict.<sup>46</sup> Donna Merwick’s *The Shame and the Sorrow: Dutch-Amerindian Encounters in New Netherland* returned to the subject of violence and brutality in New Netherland by analyzing cross-cultural interactions through a postcolonial lens. Merwick attempted to judge the actions of New Netherland’s colonists and ultimately declared that the violence they perpetuated was the result of a betrayal of “themselves – their ideal and values – and the indigenous peoples.”<sup>47</sup>

The studies of violence in early American history and the Dutch Atlantic has provided a host of explanations for brutal and bloody encounters. Andrew Lipman argues in his Bancroft Prize-winning work *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* that a new spatial understanding of the eastern seaborne can help explain the basic question: “Why was the first century of colonization so violent?”<sup>48</sup> Lipman answers that it was the physical shore

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<sup>46</sup> Evan Haefeli, “Kieft’s War and the Cultures of Violence in Colonial America,” in *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, ed. Michael A. Bellesiles (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Donna Merwick, *The Shame and the Sorrow: Dutch-Amerindian Encounters in New Netherland* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 3. Mark Meuwese has examined the role of violence in Dutch Brazil, see: Mark Meuwese, “Fear, Uncertainty, and Violence in the Dutch Colonization of Brazil (1624–1662),” in *Fear and the Shaping of Early American Societies*, ed. Lauric Henneon and L. H. Roper (Leiden, the Netherlands: BRILL, 2016), 93–114. Moving away from violence in the context of the Americas, Alison Games and Mark Meuwese have sought to explain violent encounters in the Dutch East Indies. In a comparative work, Alison Games explored the role of the English as ‘victims of violence’ in Virginia and Amboyna. In the case of Amboyna, the Dutch East India executed twenty-one employees of the Dutch East India Company after they were found guilty of conspiring with the Japanese to seize the trading post, see: Alison Games, “Violence on the Fringes: The Virginia (1622) and Amboyna (1623) Massacres,” *History* 99, no. 336 (July 1, 2014): 505–29. More recently, Mark Meuwese has been working to re-conceptualize violence perpetuated by the Dutch against indigenous peoples in both the East and West as acts of genocide, see: Mark Meuwese, “How and Why Did the Dutch East India Company Commit Genocide on the Banda Islands in 1621?” (Forum on European Expansion and Global Interactions, Irvine, California, 2016).

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015), 1.



along with “its geological quirks, economic resources, and ecological changes” that “shaped the fates of those who inhabited it in the seventeenth century.”<sup>49</sup> Cultural, economic, political, and even spatial explanations, however, fail to provide an explanation for the timing and excessive nature of the violence they describe. Climate-induced food scarcity helps explain not only the timing of colonial violence, but also why indigenous peoples were willing to participate and persist in such violent struggles in the midst of declining populations.<sup>50</sup>

Indigenous peoples turned to spiritual leaders to understand dramatic population loss and extreme weather events.<sup>51</sup> The decision by indigenous peoples to turn to violence as a means of resistance has been connected to spiritual renewal movements across the Americas. After all, as Lipman suggests, for most Natives, “killing on a large scale was a wasteful and dangerous act,” that “only served to perpetuate violence.”<sup>52</sup> Prophetic messages by charismatic spiritual leaders warned Natives that the acceptance of European beliefs and customs had eroded indigenous cultures and the only recourse was the resistance of foreign influence and a return to traditional ways.<sup>53</sup> Similar spiritual beliefs motivated indigenous resistance movements in New Netherland and Brazil, though a paucity of evidence for the indigenous peoples on Curaçao precludes similar analysis. Though, one can reasonably assume a similar spiritual context existed there. Spiritual beliefs alone, however, do not explain the timing of such movements – extreme weather events do. Extreme weather can also help explain the ferocity of resistance. These were not simply

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<sup>49</sup> Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Katherine Grandjean has made a similar argument for English colonial violence, see: Grandjean, “New World Tempests,” 75.

<sup>51</sup> Sam White, “‘Shewing the Difference Between Their Conjuraton, and Our Invocation on the Name of God for Rayne’: Weather, Prayer, and Magic in Early American Encounters,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (January 2015): 33–56.

<sup>52</sup> Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier*, 39.

<sup>53</sup> David Roberts, *The Pueblo Revolt: The Secret Rebellion That Drove the Spaniards Out of the Southwest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745-1815* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

movements to restore a cultural pastime, but instead to ensure the future survival of entire cultures.

Finally, this dissertation deploys an intercolonial analysis to contribute to Atlantic and Dutch Atlantic history specifically.<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Schmidt has argued that the Dutch West India Company's territorial claims were the literal embodiment of what is meant by the Atlantic world.<sup>55</sup> Yet the majority of work framed within the concept of the Dutch Atlantic has been focused on the Netherlands' role in Atlantic trade and the trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>56</sup> More often than not, Dutch Atlantic histories are more comparative than connective in their examinations. Mark Meuwese's *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade* falls into this comparative framework.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Inter-colonial analysis offers an enticing and complimentary interpretative framework for Atlantic World and global histories. April Lee Hatfield described inter-colonial analysis as providing a means to circumvent the "unspoken assumption that each colony operated as a largely self-contained entity that interacted with other colonies only indirectly." By following pronounced, though under-studied and under-valued, connections between Virginia and other colonies in North America and the Caribbean, Hatfield demonstrated the influence of multiple colonies on Virginia's social, cultural, economic, and political development during the seventeenth century. Hatfield focused, however, only on a single colony at the confluence of multiple intercolonial influences. I perceive of Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland as participating in a complex set of overlapping webs of relations and exchanges. When viewed through this intercolonial lens it becomes possible that a pull or tug on one side of the web could have precarious repercussions for the entire system. Intercolonial analysis can also challenge embedded conceptions based on World-System theory that perceive of global interactions through the framework of peripheral and core relations. Intercolonial analysis, while not ignoring the 'core,' attempts to displace it as the system's hub and suggests instead that processes could unfold in multiple decentralized nodes. Intercolonial analyses of the Atlantic world can also allow historians to see connections that have been missed in studies that focus on specific sites (cis-Atlantic) or on comparisons alone (trans-Atlantic). It additionally provides a framework that can extend beyond the littorals of the Atlantic Ocean if such connections are found to have analytical or explanatory merit. And when these multiple, connected nodes are affected by global environmental changes, this method allows historians to evaluate the impact of macro-scale changes on local events, the contingencies of cultural responses, and their collective implications across vast spatial arenas. See: April Lee Hatfield, *Atlantic Virginia: Intercolonial Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Schmidt, "The Dutch Atlantic: From Provincialism to Globalism," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>56</sup> For example, see: P. C. Emmer, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Economy, 1580-1880: Trade, Slavery and Emancipation* (Aldershot and Brookfield: Ashgate, Variorum, 1998); Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Johannes Postma, "A Reassessment of the Dutch Atlantic Slave Trade," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003); Wim Klooster, "An Overview of Dutch Trade with the Americas, 1600-1800," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003); Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden, the Netherlands: KITLV Press, 1998).

<sup>57</sup> Mark Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674* (Leiden, The Netherlands: BRILL, 2012).

This is not to say that comparative histories cannot provide fruitful insights. Meuwese demonstrated as much in his analysis of cultural go-betweens in New Netherland, Brazil, Angola, Congo, and the Gold Coast as has Jeroen Dewulf in his prize-winning article on Dutch slave policies in Brazil and New Netherland.<sup>58</sup> While recognizing the important contributions indigenous peoples made to the Dutch Atlantic enterprise, as unearthed by Meuwese, this project explores what happened when good relations turned bad. *Weathering Extremes* also seeks to demonstrate the connections between various nodes in the Dutch Atlantic. Susan Shaw Romney deployed entangled history in *New Netherland Connections* to uncover the “webs of connections” between New Netherland, Brazil, Africa, and the Netherlands.<sup>59</sup> These “intimate connections,” she argued, stitched together the “vast geographic and cultural distances” they spanned.<sup>60</sup> In *The Saltwater Frontier*, Lipman built on entangled history in his study of European and indigenous relations along the northeastern coast of today’s United States. By viewing the Hudson Valley from the sea rather than from the land, Lipman offers “a new way of thinking about Indian history and a new way of understanding this all-too-familiar region.”<sup>61</sup> This dissertation uses a new array of sources to complement these new entangled and intimately connected histories. In doing so, it reveals how three simultaneous, though geographically disparate resistance movements could collectively begin to unwind the Dutch Republic’s Atlantic empire.

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<sup>58</sup> Jeroen Dewulf, “Emulating a Portuguese Model: The Slave Policy of the West India Company and the Dutch Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630–1654) and New Netherland (1614–1664) in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Early American History* 4, no. 1 (March 14, 2014): 3–36.

<sup>59</sup> For an overview of entangled history, see: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 1, 2007): 787–99.

<sup>60</sup> Susanah Shaw Romney, *New Netherland Connections: Intimate Networks and Atlantic Ties in Seventeenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), loc. 394-429.

<sup>61</sup> Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier*, 1-4.

*Weathering Extremes* draws on two sorts of archives: the traditional ‘human’ archives of states, peoples, and institutions as well as proxy data – what Geoffrey Parker has referred to as the ‘natural’ archives of trees, bogs, and ice.<sup>62</sup> Neither is a perfect record of the past. Each has its own interpretive, analytical, and sampling errors, dilemmas, and challenges. Deploying both and finding commonalities between them, however, can help in separating signals from noise.<sup>63</sup> Each case study required its own set of ‘human’ and ‘natural’ archival documents. The majority of ‘human’ archival material came from colonial records kept by the Dutch West India Company, while the unique landscape and geology of each region required a unique mix of ‘natural’ records.

In the case of Dutch Brazil, I relied upon the incoming letters of military and colonial officials to the Company Council in Brazil and the Council’s outgoing letters and minutes of the Council to the States General in the Dutch Republic. These documents were organized in Brazil and then shipped to the States General where they were kept as *bijlagen* or attachments alongside copies of the States General’s responses back to Brazil. For a regular, day-to-day accounting of activities in Brazil, including information regarding weather and indigenous resistance movements, I relied upon the Notes and Secret Notes of the High and Secret Council of Brazil, a group that consisted of the governor and his council. A published English translation of Casper van Baerle’s *The History of Brazil under the Governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644*, originally published in the Netherlands in Latin in 1647, proved an invaluable resource for the contemporary narrative of Dutch Brazil’s history while C. R. Boxer’s classic *The*

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<sup>62</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, xv-xvii.

<sup>63</sup> For an overview of several “natural” archival sources and the problems associated with them, see: Neil Roberts, *The Holocene: An Environmental History* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 1998), ch. 2.

*Dutch in Brazil* introduced and guided me through Brazil's longer history with the Dutch.<sup>64</sup>

Climate reconstructions of the circum-Caribbean by Gerald Haug, long recognized as one of the region's leading historical climatologist, provided necessary counterbalances to the biased weather reports of Dutch Brazil's colonists and officials.<sup>65</sup>

Curaçao's archival record for the period under study is relatively limited compared to those for Brazil and New Netherland. In addition to the limited archival material found in the Dutch National Archives, I leaned heavily on two published works. Johannes Hartog's 1968 history of the island pointed me in the right direction to search for archival material pertaining to the Netherlands' conquest of the island in 1634 and the subsequent relations between the islands' Native Caquetios and denizens of the Dutch West India Company.<sup>66</sup> The translation of documents pertaining to Curaçao found in the New York State Archives in Albany, New York by the New Netherland Institute's Charles Gehring and Janny Venema was an indispensable volume and provided crucial evidence for the period between 1640 and 1665, including direct mentions of prolonged drought between 1641 and 1644.<sup>67</sup> While the written record was clear about what contemporaries perceived as abnormally dry conditions on the island, the Cariaco Basin provided much needed collaboration for what might simply be perceived as erroneous reporting about what is naturally a semi-arid island. The Cariaco Basin is located off the north-central coast of Venezuela and has been a key source of proxy data for the Caribbean. It is an anoxic basin, meaning it is depleted of dissolved oxygen, and as such, sediments deposited in the basin

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<sup>64</sup> Caspar Van Baerle, *The History of Brazil under the Governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644*, trans. Blanche T. van Berckel-Ebeling Koning (University Press of Florida, 2011); C. R. Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

<sup>65</sup> Gerald H. Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," *Science* 293, no. 5533 (August 17, 2001): 1304-8.

<sup>66</sup> Johannes Hartog, *Curaçao, from Colonial Dependence to Autonomy* (Aruba: De Wit Inc., 1968).

<sup>67</sup> Charles T. Gehring, ed., *Curacao Papers, 1640-1665*, trans. Charles T. Gehring (Albany, New York: New Netherland Research Center and the New Netherland Institute, 2011), <http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/4013/5543/9329/CuracaoPapers.pdf>.

accumulate without bioturbation (disruption by animals or plants). An analysis of titanium and iron concentration in samples drawn from the Cariaco Basin can be used to reconstruct precipitation levels dating back fourteen-thousand years and indicate that Dutch officials were not exaggerating. Indeed, during the Little Ice Age the region was experiencing the worst period of drought since the Younger Dryas some 12.6 to 11.5 thousand years ago.<sup>68</sup>

The written archives of New Netherland can be found in partial fragments at the New York State Archives in Albany, New York and the Dutch National Archives in The Hague. Much of the archival record from the Netherlands' States General were copied and sent to Albany and the pencil markings of the archivist searching for documents pertaining to New Netherland can still be seen on the pages of seventeenth-century documents in The Hague. Both archives experienced fires that destroyed and badly damaged the extant sources – one in the Netherlands in 1844 and one in Albany in 1911. Documents related to Willem Kieft's War were lost to the sea along with Kieft and 85 other passengers out of 107 when the ship carrying them wrecked off the coast of Wales in 1647. Where the written record has succumbed to one disaster after another, the natural archives of the Hudson Valley are well documented and continue to grow. The *North American Drought Atlas*, an online database based on 835 annual tree-ring chronologies assembled into 286 location-specific drought reconstructions dating back nearly 2,000 years offered a beautiful visualization of the droughts experienced by New Netherland's earliest farmers and colonists.<sup>69</sup> Pollen samples from various marshes along the Hudson River including the Piermont Marsh on

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<sup>68</sup> Haug, "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 1304–8.

<sup>69</sup> "Grid Point 267," *North American Drought Atlas*. For more on droughts in the Hudson Valley in the sixteenth and seventeenth century see: Neil Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?," *Journal of Climate* 26, no. 4 (February 2013): 1339–54.

the western shore of the Hudson River approximately 40 miles north of Manhattan provided evidence for cooler conditions associated with the Little Ice Age.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to the ENSO chronology by Gergis and Fowler previously mentioned, paleoclimatological evidence for global climatic shifts came from ice core sediments. T.J. Crowley's reconstruction of volcanic forcing based on sulphate records in Antarctica and Greenland indicated powerful volcanic eruptions in 1640.<sup>71</sup> These sulphate deposits appear to have come from the eruption of Komaga-take, a volcano located on the Oshima Peninsula of southern Hokkaido, and Mount Parker located on the Mindanao island in the Philippines.

Jan de Vries quipped in 1981 that, "Through climatic history, economic history, or at least agrarian history, is reduced to being 'one damn thing after another.'"<sup>72</sup> I tend to agree with De Vries, but only in so far that climate has played a powerful role in the bulk of human events. This is as true today as it was 400 years ago. The weather was at work when Hendrick Avercamp painted *Winter Landscape with Skaters* (1608) in Kampen, Overijssel, the Netherlands and Rembrandt van Rijn worked away on his infamous *Nightwatch* (1642) in his Amsterdam studio. Weather was also at work when Henry Hudson piloted what would become his namesake river in 1609 and the *Brasilianen* attacked the rain-crumbled Dutch fort in Maranhão in 1642. Climate, however, was not the only thing at work. So were histories of individuals, cultures, economics, and politics.

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<sup>70</sup> Dee Cabaniss Pederson et al., "Medieval Warming, Little Ice Age, and European Impact on the Environment during the Last Millennium in the Lower Hudson Valley, New York, USA," *Quaternary Research* 63, no. 3 (May 2005): 238–49. This work suggests that the period between 1418 and 1697 CE was marked by "less drought stress." However, this is in comparison to the megadroughts associated with the Medieval Warm Period or Medieval Climate Anomaly (800-1200 CE).

<sup>71</sup> T. J. Crowley and M. B. Unterman, "Technical Details Concerning Development of a 1200-Yr Proxy Index for Global Volcanism," *Earth System Science Data* 5 (May 23, 2013): 187–97, doi:10.5194/essd-5-187-2013.

<sup>72</sup> Jan de Vries, "Measuring the Impact of Climate on History: The Search for Appropriate Methodologies," in *Climate and History*, ed. T. Rabb and R. Rottberg (Princeton, 1981), quoted in Fagan, *The Little Ice Age*, 45.

## Part I: Context

“The climate is changing. The climate has always changed. How we react to it is a cultural question, and a knowledge of history can be of some help.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Wolfgang Behringer, *A Cultural History of Climate* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2010), 217.



## 1. Connections in the Dutch Atlantic

The creation of the Dutch West India Company forged a web of local, regional, and global connections that shaped Dutch relations with indigenous peoples throughout the Atlantic. These webs first began to take shape in the Low Countries during the Dutch Republic's 80-year struggle for independence against Spanish rule but quickly became entangled in global events. Dutch connections in the Atlantic followed in the mold of Dutch webs in the East.<sup>74</sup> Investors concerned over profits and losses protected their interests by pulling on strings and ensnaring themselves in debates and conflicts. The Company's policies guided colonial interactions and local leaders assumed wide latitude in handling pressing matters. Collectively, these circumstances catalyzed Dutch expansion, shaped the Company's "Groot Desseyn" or "Grand Design" for the Americas, and influenced Company responses to extreme weather and indigenous resistance.

Prior to the seventeenth century, the Low Countries existed as a loose confederation of seventeen provinces organized under the Hapsburg Empire and known as the Spanish Netherlands. Over the course of the Dutch Revolt, the predominantly Catholic southern provinces broke ties with the Protestant northern provinces. In 1585, a successful Spanish siege on Antwerp, then Europe's trading and economic center, pushed the Southern Netherlands to abort their role in the Revolt and reunite with Spain. At the same time, Spain's victory at the Siege of Antwerp resulted in a massive northward migration of that city's wealthy population. The Dutch Golden Age and the Dutch Republic's overseas expansion owes much to this regional

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<sup>74</sup> The Dutch West India Company modeled itself after the Netherlands' East India Company or VOC (est. 1602). The VOC itself was a joint-stock company that owed much to its English counterpart, the English East India Company (est. 1600)

web of connections and the influx of people, wealth, and skills which settled in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland in the wake of Antwerp's decline.<sup>75</sup>

While the United Provinces fought the Spanish king in order to become an independent nation, private Dutch merchants simultaneously built the foundation of the world's most far-reaching and prosperous trading powers. By the end of the sixteenth century, sailors and merchants had traveled both east and west reaching Southeast Asia and the Americas. In 1602, the inchoate Dutch government consolidated the East Indies spice trade by granting a 21-year monopoly to the newly formed Dutch East India Company. A monopoly, its advocates had argued, would provide the necessary military power to suppress Portuguese attacks and reduce the conflict and competition that threatened Asian trade. Arguments for a similar institution to govern Atlantic trade shortly followed. Willem Usselinx, an Antwerp-born merchant, became the leading advocate for an Atlantic monopoly and championed the idea as early as 1592. Usselinx gained support for his proposal from influential Calvinist leaders in Gouda and Amsterdam in large measure because he advocated for a "joint-stock company that would pursue trade, organize Dutch colonization, and support a program of Christian education of the indigenous peoples."<sup>76</sup> The States of Holland, despite provincial disagreements regarding the purposes and reach of a monopolistic trade entity, acted on his plan in 1606.<sup>77</sup> In their decision they agreed to form a committee to conduct a feasibility study on a single Atlantic trading company.

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<sup>75</sup> Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 28-31.

<sup>76</sup> De Vries, *The First Modern Economy*, 398.

<sup>77</sup> Henk den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company, 1621-1791," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003), 77-79.

Peace talks with Spain aimed at ending the Dutch Revolt began the same year and derailed the realization of Usselincx's plans. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1546-1619), the executive administrator of Holland, reached an armistice with the Spanish in April 1607. As part of the deal, though, he agreed to abandon plans to create an Atlantic trading company. The Spanish believed that such a company posed a threat to Iberian power in the Americas. In the final Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621), the Dutch agreed not to sail in areas under Iberian control. In 1618, however, the more hawkish, pro-royal Orangist faction within the Dutch Republic ousted Oldenbarnevelt from office. With the Orangist faction in charge, the States of Holland moved forward with Usselincx's original 1606 plans.<sup>78</sup>

On June 3, 1621, the States General, the Dutch Republic's governing body, chartered the West India Company (*Geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie* or WIC). The charter granted the Company a 24-year monopoly over all lands stretching from Africa to the West Indies. The purpose of the monopoly was straightforward: it would maintain the "prosperity of this country and the welfare of its inhabitants" and ensure "that their commerce may be increased as much as possible."<sup>79</sup>

The charter created a hybrid institution that historian Philip Stern has called the Company-State. The Company relied upon private financing but was granted diplomatic and militaristic powers typically held by the state alone.<sup>80</sup> The States General conferred upon the Company the

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<sup>78</sup> Den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company," 79-80. See also: Victor Enthoven, "Early Dutch Expansion in the Atlantic Region, 1585-1621," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003), 17-47. For Usselincx's continued petitions to establish a trade monopoly during the interim period, see: Willem Usselincx, "Vertoogh, Hoe Nootwendich, Nut Ende Profijtelick Het Sy Voor de Vereenighde Nederlanden Te Behouden de Vryheyt van Te Handelen Op West-Indien," 1608, KB, Pamphlet Nr. 1442.

<sup>79</sup> *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts, Being the Letters of Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, 1630-1643, and Other Documents Relating to the Colony of Rensselaerswyck* (Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, 1908), 87-89. For the original charter, see: "Octrooi Verleend Door de States General Aan de West-Indische Compagnie, Kopie," June 3, 1621, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 13.

<sup>80</sup> Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011).

power to “make contracts, leagues and alliances with the princes and natives of the countries...build any fortresses and strongholds...appoint, transfer, discharge and replace governors, troops and officers of justice...promote the settlement of fertile and uninhabited districts, and do all that the service of this country and the profit and increase of trade shall require.” The States General also agreed to furnish enlisted troops as necessary for the “establishment, security and defense of this trade...provided they be paid and supported by the Company.” If the Company ever found itself cheated, either “under the pretense of friendship or badly treated,” the Charter allowed that “they may according to circumstances and the best of their ability cause the loss to be made good by all such means as can properly be employed.”<sup>81</sup> For any “native or inhabitant” of the United Netherlands this translated into the seizure and confiscation of their ships and goods, while foreigners like the Americas’ indigenous peoples could expect diplomatic measures followed by military force.

In return for granting the Company profit-making, treaty-making, and war-making powers, the States General requested a permanent seat in the Company’s governing body known as the *Heren XIX* (Lord’s Nineteen). As a member the board, the States General could be kept informed and yield their right to advise, consent and direct the affairs of the Company. The *Heren XIX* consisted of 19 board members drawn proportionally from the Company’s five chambers: Amsterdam (8), Maze (2), Noorder-quartier (2), Zeeland (4), and Friesland (2) with one additional seat set aside for a representative of the States General.<sup>82</sup> The *Heren XIX* would

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<sup>81</sup> “Charter of the Dutch West India Company,” *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts*, 86-115.

<sup>82</sup> Stated chamber names are those reflected in the original charter and derived from provincial names. However, occasionally these chambers were referred to by the city in which their headquarters were located. So, the Chamber of Maze is sometimes referred to as the Chamber of Rotterdam; Friesland as Groningen, though occasionally referred to as *Stadt ende Landen*; Zeeland as Middleburg, and Noorderkwartier as Hoorn (though it included seven major cities north of the IJ: Hoorn, Alkmaar, Enkhuizen, Edam, Monnikendam, Medenblik, and Purmerend).

assemble, according to the charter, “so often as it shall be necessary,” which typically amounted to several meetings a year.

The policies and power structure of the Company set the broadest limits for Company leaders stationed throughout the Dutch Atlantic and influenced their ability to respond to threats of extreme weather or indigenous resistance. Vast distances and slow communication networks, however, often afforded local commanders wide-latitude to respond to situations as they saw fit, often to the dismay of Company officials back in the Dutch Republic. So while the *Heren XIX* could set forth the goals of the Company, local Company leaders were left to interpret and implement those plans.<sup>83</sup> While extreme weather had the potential to create unstable ecological and social conditions, institutional policies set parameters around which Company employees responded.

The Company’s 1621 incorporation altered the pre-existing trade relationships that earlier traders had forged with indigenous peoples throughout the Atlantic world. Before the Company’s creation, private traders traveling to the Americas organized themselves into one-off companies that disbanded after the traders returned to the Low Countries. These individuals acted as private traders and traded with relative freedom, but they still solicited the support of the States General. The governing body granted the companies a charter and provided military support, tax exemptions, and formal diplomatic letters of introduction. State support was less important in uncontested regions like New Netherland and South America’s Wild Coast where traders forged independent relations with diverse, autonomous, and sovereign groups. As long as they abided by indigenous protocols they could typically be assured a certain degree of peace. In contrast, in places like the Gold Coast and West-Central Africa where an Iberian presence existed, traders

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<sup>83</sup> Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland: A Dutch Settlement in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 62-64; 68.

relied heavily upon the diplomatic and military support of the States General to conclude treaties and alliances.<sup>84</sup> At least initially, traders in the Americas carried on relatively independent interactions. Though over time, as Company investors grew increasingly worried about their financial interests, they became less willing to remain unengaged in day-to-day diplomacy. Despite being an ocean away, their involvement in directing disputes grew as profits dropped off and indigenous hostility increased.

Dutch perceptions of the Americas' indigenous peoples had largely been shaped before they set foot on the ships that carried them across the Atlantic. The experiences of early European explorers, the stories retold by early private traders, and European geo-politics influenced their thoughts, beliefs, and early encounters. According to historian Benjamin Schmidt, a belief in "American innocence and Spanish tyranny" combined to form Dutch perceptions of Americas' indigenous peoples.<sup>85</sup> In Schmidt's estimation, the Dutch conceived of the indigenous peoples of America as suffering under the same tyrannical yoke of Spanish oppression. The Dutch thus had a moral responsibility to protect the "poor" and "innocent" natives of America and aid them in throwing off Spanish rule in the Americas, at the same time they were doing so in the Netherlands. Once the Dutch had unburdened their alleged kinsmen from Habsburg rule, they believed they could anticipate a "natural" and "easy" alliance to follow.<sup>86</sup> Domestic rhetorical platitudes, however, differed from overseas colonial realities where profits trumped morals. By the 1640s, pamphlet literature in the Netherlands reversed its tone and recognized "innocent" Spanish colonists living beside "tyrannical" Dutch colonial rulers.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Mark Meuwese, "The States General and the Stadholder: Dutch Diplomatic Practices in the Atlantic World before the West India Company," *Journal of Early American History* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 43–58.

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xix.

<sup>86</sup> Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, xvii-xix.

<sup>87</sup> Johan Maurits being the exception, see: Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 244-310.

Netherlanders living in the Americas discovered that indigenous peoples, despite assurances from *patria*, did not quickly ally with their supposed Dutch kin and instead used their relative freedom in their relationship with the Company to exert their sovereignty. Company officials, dissatisfied with what in their minds amounted to indigenous non-compliance and desperate to wrench profits and subsistence from the Americas during a period of extreme weather, turned to force to gain indigenous obedience. What they achieved in doing so, however, was an escalation of colonial conflict.

The history of the Dutch Atlantic is often told as a series of local and regional stories. This has resulted in a rich, although geographically centered, historiography. Scholars focused on individual Dutch colonies have provided deep insights into each region's commercial, religious, cultural, and even intellectual past. Yet, the history of the Dutch Atlantic as seen through the eyes of those who lived it would not have appeared so cordoned-off. Instead, it would have appeared deeply entangled, entwined, and interconnected.<sup>88</sup> The peripheral nodes of the Dutch Atlantic connected not only back to *patria*, but also to one another. People, ideas, and goods moved fluidly throughout the Atlantic between the Dutch Republic, West Africa, the Caribbean, South America, North America, and beyond. Collectively these connections formed a web of empire that overlapped with multiple other webs of indigenous and European origin.<sup>89</sup> When viewed through this interwoven lacing, the individual relationships between extreme weather events, indigenous peoples, and denizens of the Dutch West India Company take on a cumulative

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<sup>88</sup> One of the best works to date on Atlantic connections created by the Dutch West India Company is Romney, *New Netherland Connections*. For an excellent exchange on the merits of "entangled history" including the role of the core and periphery in shaping colonial histories and identities, see the AHR Forum: Entangled Empires in the Atlantic World, especially see: Cañizares-Esguerra, "Entangled Histories: Borderland Historiographies in New Clothes?," 787–99; and Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (June 1, 2007): 764–86.

<sup>89</sup> This analogy is derived from Alison Games, *The Web of Empire: English Cosmopolitans in an Age of Expansion, 1560-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

importance. The waves of what might have seemed like marginal, inconsequential events in the distant peripheries of the Dutch Empire reverberated throughout the network. Just as a fly that lands on the corner of a spider web might seem distant, its movements and struggles can be felt throughout the entire intricate web and threaten the existence of the whole.

Networks abounded through the Dutch Atlantic. They linked traders in New Netherland to Iroquois and Algonquin tribes who traded with French and English merchants who shipped their goods back to Europe. Wood harvested in the Baltic built ships and grain grown there fed the workers who constructed them. The personnel who manned these ships came from not only the Low Countries but also from much of Western Europe including Germany, England, France, and Scandinavia. Many of these individuals found themselves posted in multiple peripheries in the East and West Indies before, if they survived, returning home.<sup>90</sup> The history of the Dutch West India Company is thus both intimately local and expansively global.

A web of connections linked together Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland as well. New Netherland's original key purpose as a provision colony is perhaps the most obvious connection between them. Company directors hoped that New Netherland's fertile soils and temperate climate would provide sufficient agricultural surplus to feed both its settlers and the Company's trade colonies in the Caribbean and South America. Peter Stuyvesant, as director of Curaçao from 1642 to 1645, frequently lamented New Netherland's failures in this regard. In the face of an impending famine in 1643, he lamented that "our food supply dwindles daily and we believe that the pottage and bread cannot last more than 4 to 5 weeks, in which time we can expect relief

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<sup>90</sup> Jacobs, *Colony of New Netherland*, 38.



neither from the fatherland nor the Virginias [New Netherland].”<sup>91</sup> New Netherland in fact only sent one provisioning ship to the Caribbean in its entire existence.<sup>92</sup>

New Netherland’s failure as a provisioning colony might be read as a lack of interconnectedness between the Company’s American colonies. However, it can also be read as an illustration of their perceived interdependence. In Stuyvesant’s mind, the two regions were bound to help each other. When New Netherland failed to live up to its side of the bargain, Curaçao and by extension Brazil had to find alternative methods for procuring life-sustaining provisions. While subsistence provisions did not move between New Netherland, Curaçao, and Brazil with a level of frequency directors had intended, trade goods, peoples, ideas, aspirations, fears, and disappointment did.

Merchants profited from the relative proximity and ease of navigation between the three regions and the overlapping trade networks of indigenous and European origin. Adriaen van der Donck had spoken directly to New Netherland’s prime location in his part memoir and part promotional material *Description of New Netherland* (1656). According to Van der Donck, Newfoundland fishing grounds, Virginian tobacco, and trade opportunities in Canada, New England, and the West Indies were all within New Netherland’s vicinity.<sup>93</sup> Ample evidence attests to the realization of these trade opportunities. David de Vries, a Dutch sailor from Hoorn, frequently traded along the coast after spending time in Batavia under the command of Jan

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<sup>91</sup> Peter Stuyvesant, “Resolution on Curaçao,” June 16, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 25. Additional laments can be found on pages 18, 20, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29. See also: Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 80.

<sup>92</sup> Jacobs, *Colony of New Netherland*, 69; Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden, the Netherlands: BRILL, 2005), 216; Jan Folkerts, “The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan,” in *A Beautiful and Fruitful Place, Volume 2: Selected Rensselaerwijck Papers*, ed. Elisabeth Paling Funk and Martha Dickinson Shattuck, 2 vols. (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 182.

<sup>93</sup> Van der Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 140.

Pietersz Coen. In 1643, Gerrit Schuit from Enkhuizen and Jaecop Ijsbrantsz. from De Streek reported that on their last trip to the West Indies they purchased two chests of white sugar and traded this for tobacco in New Netherland before returning to the Netherlands.<sup>94</sup> Traders including Nicolaas Blancke in 1649 and Jacob Jansen Huys in 1658 followed suite. In Curaçao and the nearby English-controlled Leeward Islands, these two individuals traded diverse goods including serge and linen in exchange for horses, dyewood, and muscovado sugar.<sup>95</sup>

Curaçao's naturally deep and defensible harbor made it a central hub in the Netherland's Atlantic trade network and its purposes evolved accordingly. Originally conquered for its supposed salt, Curaçao transformed into a naval base and trade entrepôt by the 1640s. Over a dozen ships that plied throughout the Atlantic under the Company's banner were stationed in the island's harbor. The *Swol*, *Bontekoe*, and *Swaluwe* could be found carrying personnel, supplies, and news back and forth between Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland. The island also housed repair facilities for ships damaged in storms or attacks.<sup>96</sup>

Ships traveling between the Dutch Republic and the Americas also frequented Curaçao en route to their final destinations. Prevailing winds and currents in the Atlantic pushed ships that embarked from the Republic along a route that ended in the Caribbean.<sup>97</sup> Once there, ships disembarked supplies and sick passengers, made necessary repairs, took on fresh water, and continued their voyage. Perhaps one of the most famous of these stopovers occurred in March of 1647. After departing the Netherlands in December 1646, the *Prinses Amelia* sailed over three months through difficult waters carrying 100 passengers. Eighteen people perished on the

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<sup>94</sup> "Testimony of Gerrit Schuit and Jaecop Ijsbrantsz.," July 3, 1643, SA, Notarial Archive, 1287.24.

<sup>95</sup> Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 80-81.

<sup>96</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 81-82.

<sup>97</sup> Jacobs, *Colony of New Netherland*, 36.

voyage. The survivors included people of modest means like Geertge Nanningsdochter who traveled as a widow alongside her son as well as Company leader Peter Stuyvesant.<sup>98</sup>

Company employees gained critical experiences to confront indigenous resistance movements as they moved throughout the Atlantic. Following the disastrous leadership of Willem Kieft during his namesake war, New Netherland's investors and board members weighed various responses. New Netherland's affairs could be improved, they argued, and profits gained, "by good orders from here, and better government there."<sup>99</sup> Repairing severed indigenous relations and slowing population loss lay at the center of their recovery strategy. They believed they could achieve their aims by recalling Kieft and replacing him with a tested successor equipped with the skills necessary to assuage mounting indigenous concerns and allay colonist's growing unrest. Candidates "endowed with sufficient qualities to promote...the interests of the Company...the welfare of the Commonality, and to maintain...good correspondence...especially with the Indians" rose to the top of their list. Peter Stuyvesant and Joannes van Walbeeck, two long-time company employees, garnered special attention.<sup>100</sup> Stuyvesant and Van Walbeeck had each proven effective leaders while stationed in the Caribbean and appeared logical candidates for New Netherland's directorship. Van Walbeeck served as Curaçao's first governor from 1634 to 1638. During his tenure, he successfully negotiated an amicable though tense relationship with the Caquetio before being reassigned to Brazil as a member of Brazil's High Council in 1639 – a position he retained until 1647 when he returned to the Dutch Republic.

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<sup>98</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 86-87.

<sup>99</sup> "Report of the Board of Accounts of New Netherland," December 16, 1644, *DRCHNYI*, 153.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 153. This was not the first time Van Walbeeck had been considered for the directorship of New Netherland. He was also considered in 1637 as Wouter van Twiller's replacement. For more see Jaap Jacobs, "A Troubled Man: Director Wouter Van Twiller and the Affairs of New Netherland in 1635," *New York History* no. 85 (2004): 216–217.

Peter Stuyvesant first landed on Curaçao in 1639. During his time on the island, Stuyvesant learned valuable lessons about diplomacy and indigenous peoples. He served as commissary of stores on the island until 1642 when the island's director at the time, Jan Claesoon van Campen, died suddenly the same year.<sup>101</sup> Stuyvesant took over command of Curaçao shortly after and guided the island through a difficult drought-induced famine. His tenure as director came to a sudden end, however, after a cannonball struck and cost him his leg. Stuyvesant proceeded over one final crisis before returning to the Dutch Republic to heal – a crisis that further reveals the deep connections that existed in the Dutch Atlantic.

Sometime in April 1644, hungry and tired from two and one-half years of near-constant conflict, commander David Wiltschut gave the order to abandon the Dutch-controlled fort of São Luís in Maranhão, Brazil. He and 450 Company personnel had been forced out after a group of *Brasilianen* and Tapuyas, supported by the Portuguese, blockaded the fort and starved them out. The battered, bruised, and defeated Company soldiers boarded several ships and set sail for Curaçao where they hoped to find food, shelter, and rest. Stuyvesant reported the arrival of Wiltschut and his men a few days later. He could offer them little help, though. This small, semi-arid island in the southern Caribbean was in the midst of its own indigenous resistance movement and supply crises. Stuyvesant worried the newly arrived soldiers would exhaust the Company's supplies completely. In response, Stuyvesant and his council decided the best course of action was to send the majority of the Dutch refugees to New Netherland where there they could be "used against the rebelling Indians" there.<sup>102</sup> Stuyvesant, for his part, returned to the Dutch Republic to heal. Back home, he voluntarily submitted several reports and proposals to the

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<sup>101</sup> Prior to serving as Curaçao's director, Van Campen had served as director of St. Martin until it was seized by the Spanish in 1633.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Stuyvesant, "Resolution on Curaçao," May 26, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 41.

Company on matters relating to Curaçao and New Netherland. He believed the only way the Company could yield a profit from the colonies would be to put them under the control of a unified director. His proximity and proposals swayed the *Heren XIX*. They appointed Stuyvesant as Director General of New Netherland, Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire on July 28, 1646.<sup>103</sup> This is how he found himself once again on Curaçao along with the *Prinses Amelia*'s other passengers. The Company ostensibly hoped to overcome the disconnectedness of these regions by combining their oversight into a single position. Though, after finally arriving in New Netherland on May 11, 1647, Stuyvesant quickly became subsumed in that colony's administrative affairs and rarely spent time managing the Caribbean.

By July 1644, 130 of the original 450 Dutch soldiers from Maranhão had reached New Netherland where they were to serve at the command of Willem Kieft, the colony's director, in an ongoing conflict with several indigenous groups.<sup>104</sup> The rest of the Maranhão soldiers including David Wiltschut planned on returning to Recife rather than head to New Netherland, but instead contrary winds blew them to the Coast of Guinea. In New Netherland, Kieft, who had only recently arrived to the colony from the Netherlands, had ignited an indigenous conflict in September of 1638 when he forced local Munsee tribes to pay the Dutch tribute in the form of wampum, corn, or pelts. He argued that the Dutch were owed the tribute for the protection they offered the Munsee and decreed he would use force to seize payment. The Munsee disagreed and went to war to protect their harvests.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Romney, *New Netherland Connections*, loc. 1786.

<sup>104</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 167–168; Peter Stuyvesant, "Resolution on Curaçao," May 18, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 37–38.

<sup>105</sup> For Wiltschut's unintentional voyage to Guinea, see: Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 168. For the dispersal of the Maranhão garrison to Curaçao, New Netherland, and West Africa, see, Peter Stuyvesant, "Letter to High Council," July 31, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.103. See also, "Deposition of WIC Soldiers relating to their time in Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland," August 27, 1644, SA, Notarial Archive, 5075, inv. nr. 1289.135-136.

The fate of the Maranhão soldiers would not end in New Netherland. On August 18, 1647, after the Dutch and local sachems agreed on what would turn out be only a temporary peace, an untold number of the soldiers boarded the *Princes Amelia* along with former director Kieft. They were heading back to the Dutch Republic. The soldiers had paid their time and Kieft was to face trial for his perpetuation of the war. Eighty-six men on board would die on September 27, 1647, however, when their ship ran aground off the coast of Wales after its captain mistook the Bristol Channel for the English Channel.<sup>106</sup>

The movement of Company personnel between multiple colonial outposts highlights the mobility of people in the early modern Dutch Atlantic. Cornelis Barentsz van Amsterdam exemplifies these complex itineraries. He “shipped out as gunner with the ship *De Griffien* to Curaçao” and then traveled to New Netherland aboard *De Neptunus*. He returned to Amsterdam in 1642 aboard the *Eyckenboom*. Historian Susanah Shaw Romney traced Van Amsterdam’s travels upon his return to *patria* and found that he had been gone so long and changed so much that the notary required him to provide proof that he was “the same person as Cornelis Barentsz as above and no other.” He found two witnesses that could attest to his identity. Jan Jans, also known as Jan de Wael, served as a cooper for a combined eight years in Brazil and New Netherland before nearly drowning off the coast of Wales when the *Prinses Amelia* sank.<sup>107</sup> Dozens of additional soldiers who had served in Maranhão, Curaçao, and New Netherland were aboard the ship when it sank.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> For the death of passengers onboard, see: “Declaration of Death of Albert Henricxss from Haarlem Age 36 & Gerardus Cloodt, from Heelen Bij Aken, Age 43 in Wreck of Princess Amelia,” October 30, 1647, SA, Notarial Archive, 5075, inv. nr. 1294.179.

<sup>107</sup> Romney, *New Netherland Connections*, loc. 1617-1622.

<sup>108</sup> Records of individuals who drowned during the wreck of the *Prinses* can be found in the notarial records housed at the Stadsarchief in Amsterdam. Their families were required to attest to their death in order to access their wages. See SA, Notarial Archive, 5075, inv. nrs. 1294.173v, 183v-184, 185, 187, 188v, 193, 200, 221; 1295.6, 11v, 14v, 15; 2123.407, 425; 1574.577; 1341.75v.

Private citizens also frequently traveled throughout the Dutch Atlantic. Johannes Pelhemius, a Dutch Reformed minister, along with his wife, Catharyna van Werven, lived in Pernambuco during the 1650s, traveled back to the Amsterdam after the Portuguese's successful revolt, and then sailed back across the Atlantic to settle on Long Island. In New Netherland, Pelhemius and Van Werven found company with Portuguese Jews who took refuge there after escaping Brazil.<sup>109</sup>

Indigenous peoples traveled along the Company's transportation networks as well. In 1625, a Company fleet exploring northeastern Brazil's coasts made contact with Tupi-speaking Potiguar peoples in Paraíba and Rio Grande. The Potiguars had a tenuous relationship with the Portuguese inhabitants of the region and welcomed the Dutch. As a result of this encounter, a delegation of Potiguars traveled back to the Dutch Republic with the Company fleet in order to negotiate a Dutch-Potiguar alliance. In *patria*, the delegates learned Dutch and became Protestant Christians. In 1629, these delegates returned to Brazil to act as intercultural mediators between the Dutch and other Tupi-speaking groups.<sup>110</sup> In May 1641, a contingent of *Brasilianen* warriors aided the Company during an attack on the West African slave port of Luanda.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Romney, *New Netherland Connections*, loc. 1828-1835. For more on the place of Jews in New Netherland and the Atlantic World, see Wim Klooster, "Communities of Port Jews and Their Contacts in the Dutch Atlantic World," *Jewish History* 20, no. 2 (2006): 129-45; Noah L. Gelfand, "Jews in New Netherland: An Atlantic Perspective," in *Explorers, Fortunes and Love Letters: A Window on New Netherland* (Albany, New York: Mount Ida Press, 2009), 39-49; Evan Haefeli, *New Netherland and the Dutch Origins of American Religious Liberty* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 107-113. Peripatetic individuals also connected New Netherland and the Atlantic to the Dutch East India Company and the East Indies, see Deborah L. Krohn, Marybeth De Filippis, and Peter Miller, *Dutch New York, between East and West: The World of Margrieta van Varick* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>110</sup> Mark Meuwese, "Powerless yet Resourceful: Brazilian Indians as Political Refugees in the Dutch Republic, 1654-1657," in *The Low Countries: Crossroads of Cultures*, ed. Ton Broos, Margriet Lacy-Bruijn, and Thomas F Shannon (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 2006), 83-92.

<sup>111</sup> For the attack on Luanda including Brazilian Indian forces, see "Letter Regarding the Attack on St. Paulo de Loanda," November 11, 1641, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 5756: D.112-120; "Letter Regarding the Attack on St. Paulo de Loanda," November 11, 1641, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 5756: D.106-111; and Pieter Emmer, *The Dutch Slave Trade*, trans. Chris Emery (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 18.

Indigenous peoples did not always travel freely throughout the Dutch Atlantic. More commonly, they traveled involuntarily as forced laborers and slaves.<sup>112</sup> The Dutch Atlantic enterprise created indigenous trade networks that stretched from New Netherland to the Caribbean, Brazil, and the Wild Coast.<sup>113</sup> These were unsanctioned trades that violated the Company's explicit policy against the enslavement of indigenous peoples. The case of Jan Macxvelt, a Dutch commander stationed in Maranhão, highlights the illicit nature of Dutch involvement in the indigenous slave trade in the Caribbean and the potentially dangerous implications thereof. In March or April of 1643, Macxvelt was dispatched from Maranhão to St. Joan to catch fish and manatee. He traveled with "ten whites, ten *Brasilianen* from Ceará, and approximately thirty from Maranhão." He failed to return to Maranhão, though. Dutch leaders later heard reports that Macxvelt had disobeyed their orders and instead sailed for St. Christoffel (St. Kitts) or Barbados where he hoped to trade the "free *Brasilianen*" as slaves. Gideon Morris, the Company's liaison for Mission Indians in Ceará, ordered that Macxvelt immediately return to Maranhão with the Natives. Morris feared that news of the Natives' capture would spark an indigenous resistance.<sup>114</sup> Macxvelt's whereabouts remained unknown for nearly a year until the Netherlander Gilles Tenant found him with the help of the English and French on the island of St. Christoffel (St. Kitts). Tenant was able to recover nine of the original Natives, but the other 41 appeared to have been "wrongfully" sold on St. Eustatius – an island just ten miles to the south

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<sup>112</sup> Brett Rushforth and Jace Weaver have explicitly explored the movement of indigenous peoples through an Atlantic world framework. In their analyses, indigenous peoples moved throughout the Americas and across the Atlantic as captives, slaves, guides, sailors, soldiers, diplomats, and as spectacles. In the process, they carried and shared their geographic, agricultural, and cultural knowledge in ways that aided and challenged colonialism, see: Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

<sup>113</sup> Cornelius C. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast 1580-1680* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1971), 262-263.

<sup>114</sup> "Letter from Gideon Morris to Governor-General and Council," June 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.289.



of St. Christoffel.<sup>115</sup> Tenant returned Macxvelt to Brazil where the Council of Justice imprisoned him as an example to others. Though, despite the Council's best intentions to make an example of him, Macxvelt escaped from prison soon thereafter.<sup>116</sup>

Macxvelt received strict punishment not because he violated the Company's policy against indigenous enslavement but because he attempted to enslave indigenous *allies*. This point is made clearer when looking at later actions by Dutch leaders in regards to indigenous enemies of the Company. In 1644, Peter Stuyvesant sent several Esopus prisoners-of-war to the Netherlands, Curaçao, and Bonaire. Those lucky enough to be sent to the Netherlands were set free, but those sent to the Caribbean joined other indigenous peoples from throughout the Americas in enslavement.<sup>117</sup> In 1660, during the Esopus Wars (1659-1663), Stuyvesant sent an additional 15 to 20 Esopus to Curaçao and Bonaire. The Esopus worked alongside African slaves in order to provide service to the Company.<sup>118</sup> Stuyvesant justified his actions by suggesting that enslaving the Natives would expedite the war's end and promised that he would send for their return once the Esopus signed a peace treaty.<sup>119</sup>

The Esopus sent to Curaçao and Bonaire would have been familiar with the European institution of slavery. As early as the 1620s, Kongolese and West African slaves had been enslaved in the Hudson Valley by the Company. After the 1637 Dutch conquest of Fort Elmina in West Africa, slaves in New Netherland and the Dutch Atlantic increasingly came from Ghana.<sup>120</sup> African slaves frequently moved involuntarily throughout the Dutch Atlantic. Many

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<sup>115</sup> "Letter from Gilles Venant and Jehan Jobsz. to Zeeland Chamber," March 10, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 59.149.

<sup>116</sup> "Letter from Henric Hamel and A. Van Bullestrate to the *Heren XIX*," February 13, 1645, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 60.10 (fol. 23-24).

<sup>117</sup> Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*, 2nd ed. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 84.

<sup>118</sup> *DRCHNY* XIII, 169.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>120</sup> Romney, *New Netherland Connections*, loc. 370.

New Netherland slaves arrived via Curaçao and Brazil. In 1655, one slave voyage's itinerary called for stops in the Bight of Guinea, the Caribbean, and New Netherland before returning to Amsterdam.<sup>121</sup> In 1663, the Company chartered the *Gideon* to travel to Angola to purchase slaves before heading to Cayenne, Curaçao, and New Netherland. In Angola, the Dutch traders picked up 421 slaves. They arrived in Curaçao with 348 slaves, though deemed 36 to be “unsellable.” They then headed to New Netherland with 300 slaves aboard. In New Netherland, 216 were put to work for the Company, another 72 were distributed to Peter Alrights, and the remaining two were distributed via the drawing of lots.<sup>122</sup> Slaves in New Netherland did not simply pass through Brazil or the Caribbean. Some spent significant time there before being sent to New Netherland. In 1644, New Netherlanders requested several slaves from Brazil to produce provisions that could be exported back to Brazil in support of the sugar trade.<sup>123</sup> Each slave in this network created yet another connection, albeit unwillingly, in the Dutch Atlantic.

The Dutch West India Company also acted as a knowledge network and conduit for the flow of information, news, and ideas. Trade companies provided resources and avenues for soldiers, sailors, scientists, anthropologists, and ethnographers to gain access to and spread knowledge.<sup>124</sup> Indigenous actors often facilitated these exchange by sharing medicinal and agricultural knowledge necessary for European invaders to survive in foreign environments.

Through the work of contemporaries like Willem Piso and Georg Markgraf, the Dutch collected

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., loc. 1599.

<sup>122</sup> “Summary of an Affidavit Concerning a Slave-Trading Voyage to New Netherland, 1663-1664,” March 23, 1666, English Translations of Notarial Documents in the Gemeente Archief of Amsterdam Pertaining to America, Collections of Historic Hudson Valley, Rockefeller Archive Center, Pocantico Hills, New York, [http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/6913/6639/6115/Summary\\_of\\_an\\_Affidavit\\_Concerning\\_a\\_Slave-Trading\\_Voyage\\_to\\_\\_New\\_Netherland\\_1663-1664\\_.pdf](http://www.newnetherlandinstitute.org/files/6913/6639/6115/Summary_of_an_Affidavit_Concerning_a_Slave-Trading_Voyage_to__New_Netherland_1663-1664_.pdf).

<sup>123</sup> Dewulf, “Emulating a Portuguese Model,” 8.

<sup>124</sup> For examples of these exchanges, see: Ibid., 3-36; Michiel van Groesen, “Officers of the West India Company, Their Networks, and Their Personal Memories of Dutch Brazil,” in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks*, ed. Siegfried Huigen & Jan L. de Jong (Leiden, the Netherlands: BRILL, 2010); and Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007).

and codified a wealth of scientific knowledge from indigenous peoples.<sup>125</sup> And through the artistic renderings of *Brasilianen* and Tapuya peoples by Albert Eckhout and American landscapes by Frans Post and Johannes Vingboons the Dutch gained a glimpse at the world they had only read about before.<sup>126</sup>

People, goods, and ideas frequently flowed throughout the Dutch Atlantic and in the process connected diverse ecosystems and geographies. The Company planned to utilize this diversity to create a unified and self-supporting enterprise. Curaçao's natural harbor provided a sally-port and naval base, Brazil's tropical climate grew cash crops like sugar and tobacco, and New Netherland's fertile soils could supply all three with provisions to feed colonists, administrators, cooperative indigenous allies, and slaves alike. Collectively, these colonies were supposed to form a self-sustaining colonial system from whence the Company could easily wrench profits and prosperity. Investors knew the Company would have to incur some of the initial costs, but believed once the system functioned they could sit back and reap a sizable return on their investment. The interdependent connections created within the Dutch Atlantic, however, also made it fragile and vulnerable.

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<sup>125</sup> Junia Ferreira Furtado, "Tropical Empiricism: Making Medical Knowledge in Colonial Brazil," in *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World*, ed. James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>126</sup> Rebecca Parker Brien, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil, 1637-1644* (Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

## 2. A Climatological Pivot Phase in the Early Modern Atlantic

Earth and its inhabitants experienced historical climatic shifts between 1300 and 1850 during the Little Ice Age. In Europe, temperatures dropped between a half and one-and-a-half degrees Celsius on average. Cooler temperatures stunted growing seasons and crops never ripened; stomachs went unfed and diseases spread more readily. In Africa, Asia, and the Americas, rains stopped falling and when they finally resumed, they often arrived with cataclysmic intensity only to disappear as quickly and disastrously as they had returned. In the Americas, megadroughts accompanied decreased yearly temperatures, afflicted indigenous peoples long before European arrival, and later altered the shape of European-indigenous relations. The prevalence of megadroughts interspersed with shorter, but still devastating droughts has led some scholars to classify this period as the Little Drought Age.<sup>127</sup>

European arrivals to the Americas happened to occur during a period of abnormally cold, dry years. Unusually cold years ice-locked Henry Hudson's crew in James Bay leading to his death in 1611.<sup>128</sup> The most extreme drought to strike Virginia in 800 years occurred simultaneously with the demise of the Lost Colony of Roanoke between 1587 and 1589. Similarly historical drought conditions led to high mortality rates and the near abandonment of the Jamestown Colony over the course of 1606 and 1612 as the colony persevered through what historical climatologists now know to be the driest seven-year period in 770 years.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Endfield, *Conflicts over Water in the 'Little Drought Age' in Central Mexico*; Parker, *Global Crisis*, ch. 15; John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 438-451; David W. Stahle et al., "Tree-Ring Reconstructed Megadroughts over North America since A.d. 1300," *Climatic Change* 83, no. 1-2 (March 10, 2007): 133-49.

<sup>128</sup> Dagomar Degroot, "Exploring the North in a Changing Climate: The Little Ice Age and the Journals of Henry Hudson, 1607-1611," *Journal of Northern Studies* 9 (2015): 69-91

<sup>129</sup> Stahle, David W., Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Dennis B. Blanton, Matthew D. Therrell, and David A. Gay. "The Lost Colony and Jamestown Droughts." *Science* 280, no. 5363 (April 24, 1998): 564-67.

Another turbulent era of extreme weather-related crises lasted from 1630 to 1645 and coincided with nearly a half dozen known conflicts in the Americas. These include, but are not limited to, the Pequot War (1637), the Mexico Revolt (1641-1642), and two Portuguese rebellions – first against the Spanish (1641) and then against the Dutch (1645).<sup>130</sup> Three additional colonial conflicts erupted in Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley when indigenous peoples resisted Dutch intrusions on their lands. Each of these conflicts has been tied to geopolitical, economic, inter-colonial or cross-cultural conflict. Recent advances in historical climatology reveal extreme weather events often correlated to these episodes of colonial violence.

A complex interplay of oceanic and atmospheric forces including El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, volcanic eruptions, and sunspot activity govern the Americas' climate. Sudden changes in all three of these forces between 1620 and 1645 drove changes in the Earth's climate, spurred extreme weather events, and created ripple effects that influenced European colonization throughout the Americas. The increased frequency and severity of extreme weather over a short period of time and a shift in the climate from one regime to another mark this period as a climatological pivot phase.<sup>131</sup> Strong La Niña conditions, reduced sunspot activity, and increased volcanic eruptions led to unusually heavy rains in northeastern Brazil, intense drought conditions in the South Caribbean, and colder and snowier winters in the Hudson Valley.

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<sup>130</sup> Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War," 75–100; Parker, *Global Crisis*, pg. xix; Alfred A. Cave, *The Pequot War* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996); Jonathan Israel, *Empires and Entrepreneurs: Dutch, the Spanish Monarchy and the Jews, 1585-1713* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1990), ch. 11-12.

<sup>131</sup> Johnson, "When Good Climate Go to Bad: Pivot Phases, Extreme Events, and Opportunities for Climate History," 329-337.

The impact of ENSO events on global and regional histories saw a surge of interest following the devastating El Niño events of 1982-83 and 1997-98. Deluges and landslides in California along with droughts in India, Africa, and Peru garnered wide-spread media attention. In the aftermath of these ENSO events, governments and non-profits created organizations and offices to study ENSO events' causes and effects. Historians took notice as well and began publishing a wide-range of articles and manuscripts detailing ENSO events' human history. Research ranged from the discovery of El Niño by Alexander von Humboldt during his venture through South America at the turn of the nineteenth-century, to its potential to wreak havoc on social and political relationships throughout the world.

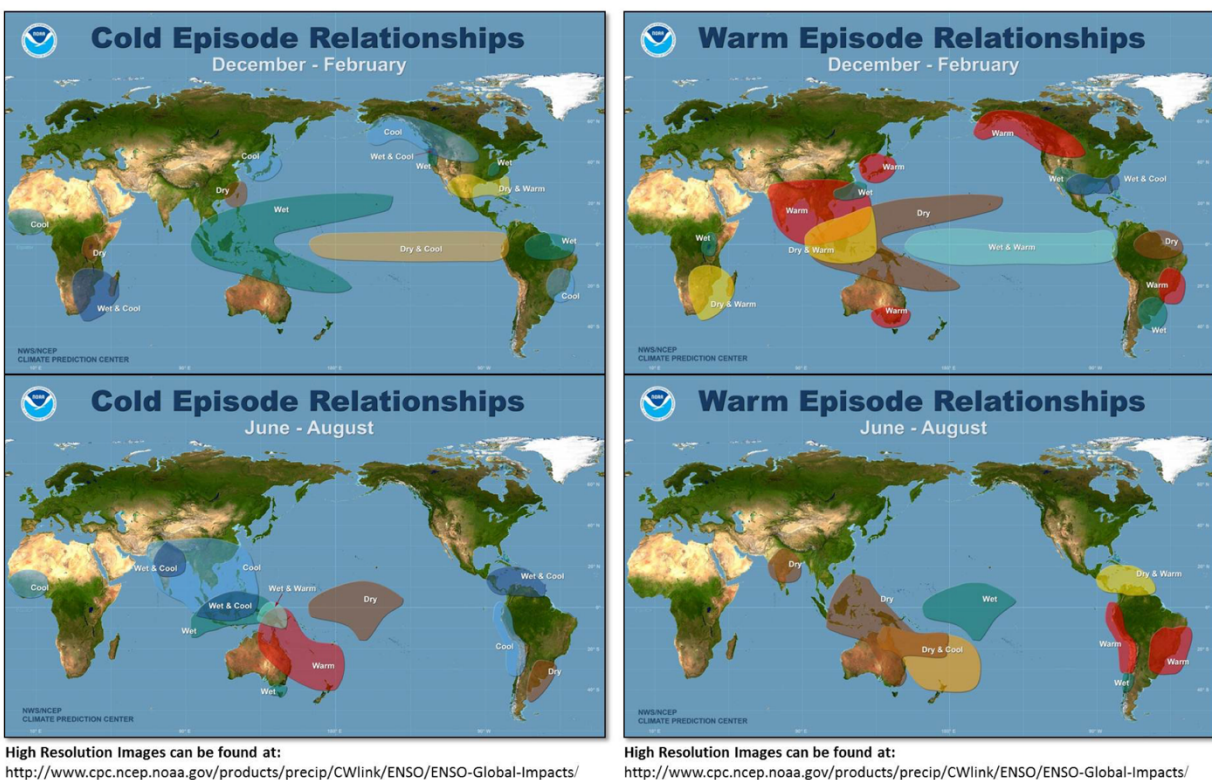


Figure 2.1 & 2.2: Left: ENSO Cold Episode (La Niña) Relationships: NOAA - [http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis\\_monitoring/impacts/cold.gif](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/impacts/cold.gif). Right: ENSO Warm Episode (El Niño) Relationships: NOAA - [http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis\\_monitoring/impacts/warm.gif](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/impacts/warm.gif)

ENSO events manifest themselves in two phases. El Niño, the warm phase of ENSO events, typically precedes its sister La Niña – the cold phase of ENSO events. While El Niño events have garnered more historical attention, both have far-reaching global impacts (see Figure 2.1 & 2.2) that have shaped human history. El Niño events are determined by changes in Pacific sea surface temperatures and trade wind patterns. During El Niño events, trade winds slacken causing warm western Pacific waters to move to the middle of the Pacific which leads to stormier and wetter conditions along the western coast of South America. Simultaneously, drier and warmer conditions prevail in the Caribbean during the summer while in the winter warmer air settles in over much of Canada and the northeast of the United States. In northeastern Brazil, temperatures rise as does the likelihood of droughts and forest fires. El Niño conditions, which were for the most part strong throughout the duration of the seventeenth century, were much less prevalent in the proxy record for the period between 1620 and 1645, though there is some indication that moderate El Niño events might have occurred in 1630 and 1635 followed by weaker events in 1638, 1639, 1641, and 1642.<sup>132</sup> Outside of the Americas, El Niño can cause droughts in Ethiopia, Southern Africa, India, Asia, and Australasia.<sup>133</sup>

Sea surface temperatures in the Pacific also determine La Niña events. Trade winds blowing over the Pacific push the ocean's surface water to the west and create storms over Indonesia. The hole created by wind-driven waters in the east allows cold, nutrient-rich water to well up in the eastern Pacific creating favorable fishing conditions along the coasts of Peru and Ecuador. Canada and the northeast of the United States tend to experience colder and wetter/snowier winters (December - February) during La Niña events while heavy rain plagues

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<sup>132</sup> Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 439; Gergis and Fowler, "A History of ENSO Events since A.D. 1525," 371.

<sup>133</sup> Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts; Fagan, Floods, Famines, and Emperors*.

northern Brazil. Elsewhere during the winter, La Niña causes cooler conditions in Western Africa; wet and cool conditions in Southern Africa, India, Southeast Asia and Australasia; and dry conditions in much of China. During the summer (June - August) La Niña's impact in North America wanes. In the Caribbean, however, weaker winds and decreased atmospheric stability spur hurricane formation and cause drier conditions in southern Brazil. During the mid-seventeenth century, several decades of frequent though mild La Niña conditions (1520s to 1650s) gave way to a period with a low frequency but relatively high magnitude of La Niña events (1650s, 1660s, 1690s).<sup>134</sup> In the interim years, La Niña events occurred on an almost yearly basis. Between 1620 and 1645, sixteen out of 25 years experienced moderate to extreme La Niña conditions (see figure 2.3). Prolonged La Niña conditions occurred between 1622 and 1632 and again between 1637 and 1639.<sup>135</sup> These chronologies bring a much needed clarity and specificity to the generally cited trend of increasingly intense El Niño episodes during the seventeenth century.

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<sup>134</sup> Gergis and Fowler, "A History of ENSO Events since A.D. 1525," 343–87.

<sup>135</sup> 1622 (S), 1623 (VS), 1624 (VS), 1625 (M), 1626 (VS), 1627 (W), 1628 (W), 1629 (S), 1630 (S), 1631 (VS), 1632 (E), 1635 (W), 1637 (S), 1638 (M), 1639 (M), 1641 (VS), 1642 (S), 1644 (S), 1645 (E). E = extreme, VS = very strong, S = strong, M = moderate, W = weak. See: Gergis and Fowler, "A History of ENSO Events since A.D. 1525," 371.



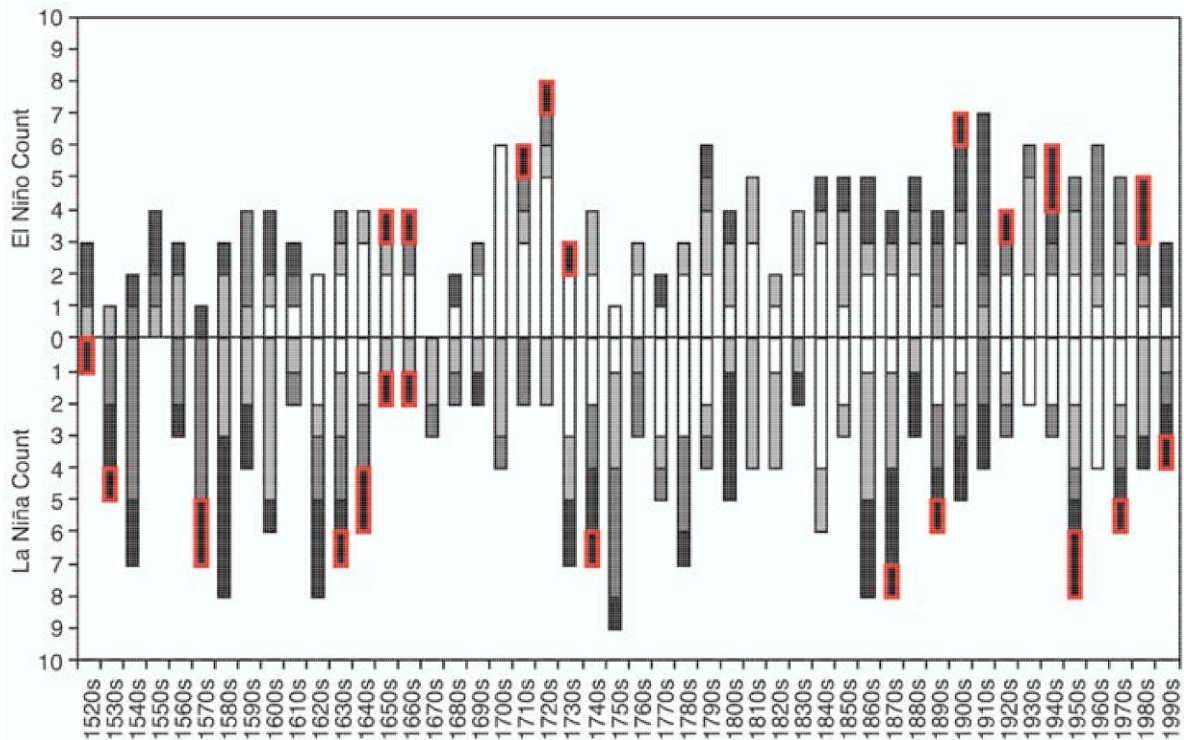


Figure 2.3: Decadal trends in reconstructed El Niño and La Niña event magnitude characteristics, A.D. 1525-2000. Note the red box around the 1630s and 1640s. This box indicates an extreme ENSO magnitude. Joëlle L. Gergis and Anthony M. Fowler, “A History of ENSO Events Since A.D. 1525: Implications for Future Climate Change,” *Climatic Change* 92, no. 3–4 (February 2009): 373.

La Niña events have impacted human history in myriad ways. Their ability to disrupt sea travel through increased hurricane activity is perhaps most notable amongst these impacts.<sup>136</sup> However, ENSO is not the only oceanic-atmospheric factor at work during hurricane season. The variability of hurricanes is the result of ENSO and the Atlantic Multi-Decadal Oscillation (AMO) working together. A warm phase of the AMO creates stronger, wetter West African monsoons and can cause a warmer ocean, decrease wind shear, and drive hurricane

<sup>136</sup> During La Niña events, weaker vertical wind shear and trade winds combine with decreased atmospheric stability to favor increased Atlantic hurricane activity. The opposite occurs during El Niño events when strong vertical wind shear and trade winds together with greater atmospheric stability produce fewer hurricanes.

formations.<sup>137</sup> Solar radiation or radiative forcing has also been correlated to hurricane formations. During the Maunder Minimum (1645-1715 CE), a period of decreased sunspot activity, the Caribbean experienced a 75% reduction in decadal-scale tropical cyclone activity. Due to a limited quantity and quality of proxy sets for this time period, historical climatologists looked for evidence of shipwrecks to provide additional proof of hurricane activity. These climatologists correlated a documentary time series of Spanish shipwrecks in the Caribbean with a tree-growth suppression series from the Florida Keys and determined that shipwrecks provide a valid and reliable proxy for hurricane activity.<sup>138</sup> The decades prior to the onset of the Maunder Minimum witnessed significant numbers of shipwrecks that seem to fluctuate with known La Niña episodes (see Figure 2.4). With the exception of 1628, the highest number of shipwrecks between the 1620s and 1640s correlate to years of strong or very strong La Niña years: 1622, 1631, and 1641 (see figure 2.5).

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<sup>137</sup> Gerry Bell, “Impacts of El Niño and La Niña on the Hurricane Season,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, (April 28, 2016), <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/enso/impacts-el-niño-and-la-niña-hurricane-season>.

<sup>138</sup> Valerie Trouet, Grant L. Harley, and Marta Domínguez-Delmás, “Shipwreck Rates Reveal Caribbean Tropical Cyclone Response to Past Radiative Forcing,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 12 (March 22, 2016): 3169–74, doi:10.1073/pnas.1519566113. For more on the relationship between hurricanes and the Caribbean, see: Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015).

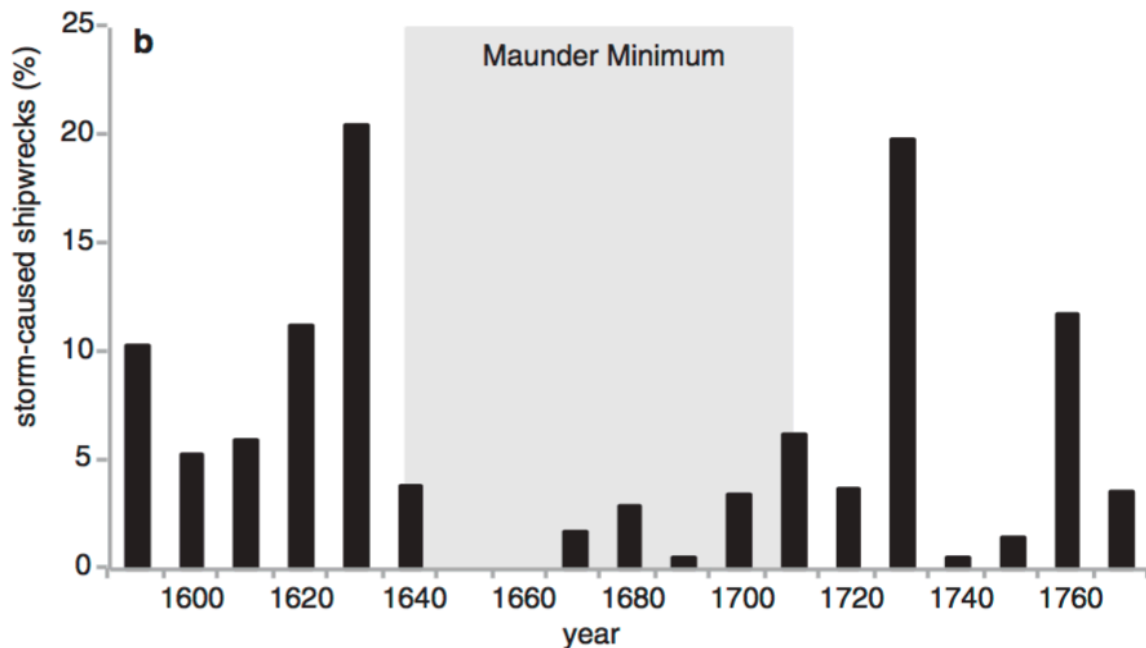


Figure 2.4: Percentage of storm-caused shipwrecks (1590-1770). Valerie Trouet, Grant L. Harley, and Marta Domínguez-Delmás, “Shipwreck Rates Reveal Caribbean Tropical Cyclone Response to Past Radiative Forcing,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 12 (March 22, 2016): 3169–74.

Year	La Niña	Ship-wrecks												
1621		3	1626	VS	0	1631	VS	20	1636		1	1641	VS	9
1622	S	12	1627	W	0	1632	E	0	1637	S	0	1642	S	0
1623	VS	6	1628	W	10	1633		0	1638	M	0	1643		2
1624	VS	0	1629	S	0	1634		2	1639	M	3	1644	S	0
1625	M	0	1630	S	4	1635	W	2	1640		0	1645	E	0

Figure 2.5: La Niña intensity and Caribbean shipwrecks (1621-1645). Empty cells indicate an absence of La Niña activity. Take special note of 1622, 1631, and 1641 in which a significant number of shipwrecks correlate to high intensity La Niña events.

ENSO's ability to cause drought and extreme rain has also been linked to the spread of epidemic disease. Drought and extreme rain have the potential to create a nefarious environment for the breeding and spread of disease-carrying mosquitos such as *A. aegypti* and *Anopheles* which carry yellow fever and malaria, respectively. Rainy seasons create fecund periods for mosquitos to abound and repopulate. Conversely, droughts have the potential to suppress epidemic disease outbreaks by eliminating natural mosquito breeding grounds. However, dry periods also prompt individuals to store and collect water whenever and wherever they can, thus providing suitable man-made breeding sites for mosquitos. The most damaging periods for individuals in disease-prone regions occur when heavy rains follow drought years – the exact situation characteristic of La Niña events.<sup>139</sup> Extreme weather could thus spur both harvest failures and famines that lead to malnourishment and weakened immune systems that made individuals more susceptible to disease. Placing an exact number on how many indigenous peoples succumbed to disease due to extreme weather would be mere speculation. Instead, here the argument is simply that extreme weather was yet another factor in what some have referred to as the “Great Dying.” The reach of extreme weather extended beyond the graves of millions of indigenous Americans and across the storming Atlantic. Extreme weather events in many ways encouraged the exploitation of Africans as they compounded the devastation and destruction wrought by disease epidemics on the indigenous populations of the Americas whom many Europeans relied upon as a labor source.<sup>140</sup> The Dutch West India would take advantage of this

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<sup>139</sup> J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 59-60.

<sup>140</sup> According to John Brooke, the climate of West Africa and specifically the Sahel and savannah region between the Niger and the Atlantic became increasingly dry during and following the Medieval Climate Anomaly. As a result, the range of the livestock-killing tsetse fly moved south, allowing for the spread of nomadic peoples into the expanded Sahel territory. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century, these nomadic peoples had converted to Islam, established the Mali and later Songhay empires, and become key components in an expanding trade network based on gold and

climate-induced crisis in west Africa to gain wealth through the forced enslavement of Africans.<sup>141</sup>

ENSO events are not the only oceanic-atmospheric dynamic at work in the Caribbean. In addition to the impact tropical Pacific sea surface temperatures (SST) can have on the Caribbean during ENSO events, the Caribbean is also susceptible to changes in the North Atlantic Oscillation (NOA), fluctuations in the South American Monsoon System (SAMS), and displacements of the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ).<sup>142</sup> Climate scientists are working to better understand these complex relationships, but great uncertainty still exists around both climatologists' predictive capacity and historical climatologists' ability to reconstruct the relationship between ENSO events and the Caribbean's past climate. So while one would expect cooler and wetter conditions in the southern Caribbean during a La Niña event, this relationship does not always necessarily hold. In fact, sediment records from the Cariaco Basin off the coast of Venezuela suggest the exact opposite. This proxy data suggests decreased rain water run-off during much of the seventeenth century.<sup>143</sup> This, it seems, is connected to a southern displacement of the ITCZ that resulted in drier conditions in the southern Caribbean and wetter

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slaves that connected West Africa to Europe, the Indian Ocean basin, and Southeast Asia. Slaves often entered these networks as a result of climate-induced displacements. Drought drove individuals from marginal areas to more fecund regions where they entered into temporary slavery. Severe droughts and ensuing famines in West Africa during the 1640s and 1680s and recurrent droughts in west central Africa (Angola) beginning in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century increased the movement of peoples and the total number of Africans in positions of temporary subordination. Brooke's has suggested a correlation between drier periods that first struck Angola before moving north to the Sahel region, the locations of slave ship embarkations, and the intensity of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. He argues that while "certainly climate did not drive the rise of the slave trade...it set the conditions, encouraging the rise of small warring states and increasing the general stress on the population with crop failure and famine," see: Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 442-444.

<sup>141</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 468

<sup>142</sup> Alessandra Giannini, Yochanan Kushnir, and Mark A. Cane, "Interannual Variability of Caribbean Rainfall, ENSO, and the Atlantic Ocean," *Journal of Climate* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 297-311.

<sup>143</sup> Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 1304-8.

conditions in northeastern Brazil – conditions that are consistent with the written records of Dutch commanders in Brazil and on the island of Curaçao during the 1640s.<sup>144</sup>

Volcanic eruptions also had the powerful potential to influence extreme weather events in the Americas. From July 31 to October 9, 1640, the Komaga-take volcano, located on the Oshima Peninsula of southern Hokkaido, Japan, erupted. The explosion sent ash and debris as far as Honshu, produced a debris avalanche that reached the sea, and killed 700 people.<sup>145</sup> Just a few months later, on January 4, 1641, Mount Parker on Mindanao Island in the Philippines erupted.<sup>146</sup> In addition to sending ash and sediment high into the atmosphere, these eruptions combined to alter the global climate in ways that compounded the worst impacts of European colonialism on indigenous societies in the Americas.<sup>147</sup> What made Mount Parker's 1641 eruption significant was not simply its magnitude, but its timing. The period surrounding Mount Parker's eruption was a highly active volcanic period. Fourteen confirmed eruptions occurred around the globe between 1640 and 1641. If we broaden the temporal scale just slightly and narrow the geographic range, there was a record twelve volcanic eruptions around the Pacific near the equator between 1638 and 1644.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Xianfeng Wang et al., "Wet Periods in Northeastern Brazil over the Past 210 Kyr Linked to Distant Climate Anomalies," *Nature* 432, no. 7018 (December 9, 2004): 740–43.

<sup>145</sup> Smithsonian Institute, "Global Volcanism Program," accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.volcano.si.edu/>; Rosanne D'Arrigo, Gordon Jacoby, and David Frank, "Dendroclimatological Evidence for Major Volcanic Events of the Past Two Millennia," in *Volcanism and the Earth's Atmosphere*, ed. Alan Robock and Clive Oppenheimer (American Geophysical Union, 2013), 255–61.

<sup>146</sup> The eruptions of Komaga-take and Mount Parker are each rated 5 VEI (Volcanic Explosivity Index). This is the same rating of Mount St. Helen's 1980 eruption. In comparison, the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora which left Europeans and North Americans frigid and hungry during 1816, the so called "year without a summer," measures 7 VEI. See: Smithsonian Institute, "Global Volcanism Program."

<sup>147</sup> Francisco G. Delfin Jr. et al., "Geological, 14C, and Historical Evidence for a 17th Century Eruption of Parker Volcano, Mindanao, Philippines," *Journal of the Geological Society of the Philippines* 52 (1997): 25–42; Brian M Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 105.

<sup>148</sup> Geoffrey Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (October 2008): 1070-72.

One way to assess the global impacts of these eruptions is to examine the concentration of sulfate found in Greenland ice core samples. Sulfate readings can assist in ascertaining the overall impact of volcanic eruptions on global climate change. Each volcano eruption has a different aerosol composition. Some are sulphur-rich while others are sulphur-poor. In general, large levels of sulphur-dioxide result in greater climatic impacts. Ice core samples reveal that the year  $1640.5 \pm 1$  shows a sulfate fluctuation of 16.4 followed closely by a fluctuation of 17.6 in  $1640.95 \pm 1$ . In other words, 1640 to 1641 saw an intense and measurable unipolar change in atmospheric disruption that would have caused a notable temperature decrease in the Americas.<sup>149</sup>

Sunspot activity might be the final piece of the puzzle in understanding the causes of the mid-seventeenth century pivot phase. According to nineteenth-century astronomer Edward Maunder's reconstructions of European sunspot observations, significantly fewer sunspots occurred between 1640 and 1720 compared to the surrounding years. In general, the sun undergoes an 11-year cycle of solar activity and longer-term solar minima and maxima. During a maxima, sunspots release a quick burst of solar radiation that collectively warms the Earth. In contrast, about once a century, a minima sets in and the sun's radiation decreases. Any significant

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<sup>149</sup> T. J. Crowley and M. B. Unterman, "Technical Details Concerning Development of a 1200 Yr Proxy Index for Global Volcanism," *Earth System Science Data* 5, no. 1 (May 23, 2013): 187–97; William S. Atwell, "Volcanism and Short-Term Climatic Change in East Asian and World History, c 1200-1699," *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 35. Available online: [ftp://ftp.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/data/paleo/climate\\_forcing/volcanic\\_aerosols/crowley2013/crowley2013so4-nh.txt](ftp://ftp.ncdc.noaa.gov/pub/data/paleo/climate_forcing/volcanic_aerosols/crowley2013/crowley2013so4-nh.txt) (accessed March 8, 2017). The impact of an eruption of this magnitude on the Earth's climate, known as volcanic forcing, is controversial with the latest research providing a clearer picture than ever before. In general, for a volcanic eruption to have global climate impacts, the explosive force must be great enough to launch aerosols past the troposphere and into the stratosphere where they can be picked up and moved throughout the atmosphere. The increase in atmospheric aerosols increases the Earth's albedo or reflectivity which then cools the planet, decreasing global temperatures. Atmosphere aerosols also create dust veils, visible to the human eye, which form when large enough concentration of aerosols accumulate in the atmosphere. During the mid-seventeenth century, individuals across the globe commented on unusually dark days, reddened skies, and a pale sun. We now know that the phenomenon were directly correlated to the increased volcanic activity of the mid-seventeenth century. See: Parker, *Global Crisis*, 13-14.

decrease in the frequency of sunspot activity can lead to a decrease in global temperatures – a situation that volcanic dust veils exacerbates. While the Maunder Minimum typically begins in 1645, this formal start date was preceded by two periods of weak sunspot activity, 1625 to 1626 and 1637 to 1645, the later correlating to a time of increased violence in the Americas.<sup>150</sup>

Scientists, however, continue to debate the impact of sunspot activity on Earth's climate. While warm and cold periods have correlated to solar maxima and minima, the relationship does not always hold true. For example, the Grindelwald Fluctuation (1560 to 1630), despite being an abnormally cold period, occurred alongside an increase in solar activity. In relation to today's anthropogenic climate change, solar activity's influence is minimal. Thus, it is important to see solar activity as but one of many causes of climate change.<sup>151</sup>

Collectively, frequent ENSO events, increased volcanic eruptions, and reduced sun spot activity drastically altered Earth's climate in ways that had life-altering implications for all life on Earth. Between 1620 and 1645, humans, plants, animals, and even viruses responded, adapted, and changed as a result of complex and reciprocal relationships. Understanding how humans understood and responded to climatic changes and extreme weather events requires both a local and global perspective. Climate historians are well suited to zoom in on a few locations on the Earth's map to get a better idea of how humans met the challenge of changing climates. In places like Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley, this pivot phase correlated to a period of tense colonial conflicts.

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<sup>150</sup> Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe," 1070; Parker, *Global Crisis*, 13.

<sup>151</sup> Dagomar Degroot, "What Was the Maunder Minimum? New Perspectives on an Old Question," *HistoricalClimatology.com*, accessed March 8, 2017, <http://www.historicalclimatology.com/1/post/2016/06/what-was-the-maunder-minimum-new-perspectives-on-an-old-question.html>.



## Part II: Dutch Brazil, 1630-1654

“Nature was as bountiful in the West as in the East, and the natives, unwilling to tolerate Portuguese domination any longer, were ready to shake off the royal yoke.” – Casper van Baerle, *History of Brazil* (1647)<sup>1</sup>



View of Maranhão/São Luís. Johannes Vingboons, 1665.

National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague

Foreign Map Collection 4.VELH: inv. nr. 619.71

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<sup>1</sup> Casper van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 13.

### 3. An Introduction to Dutch Brazil

The history of Dutch involvement in the Americas dates back to the late fifteenth century, but its formal involvement began with the Company's 1621 Charter. The Company had a difficult time finding investors and capital in its early years. Many potential investors perceived the Company's establishment as a ruse by the States General to wage war against the Spanish Habsburgs and worried about investing in a military campaign disguised as a commercial enterprise. It took the Company until the summer of 1623 to reach its goal of seven million guilders. Financing finally came thanks to the support of non-traditional funders in the Dutch Republic's inland regions rather than funders in coastal regions more attuned to overseas trade opportunities.<sup>2</sup>

Sufficient funds in pocket, the *Heren XIX* began devising plans for their American enterprise. Two plans were put forth. The first called for a full out assault on Spanish and Portuguese colonies. The second called for a targeted attack on the Spanish salt-producing colony of Punta de Araya on the Venezuelan coast. In the end, both plans were tabled – the first deemed too risky and the second unnecessary. The Company's reformulated plan called for a three-pronged attack that could totally disrupt Iberia's stranglehold in the region. First, they would weaken the Spanish mainland's ability to continue its attacks on the Netherlands in the on-going Dutch Revolt. Spanish hostilities had recently been reignited following the end of the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621). Second, the Company needed to create an opening for Dutch colonization in the profitable sugar trade. And third, they wanted to shift Spanish riches into

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<sup>2</sup> Meuwese also makes the point that inland funders tended to be driven more by religious beliefs, motivated by anti-Catholic and hard-line Calvinist ideas, see: Meuwese, *Brothers in Arm*, 26.

Dutch hands either by capturing elements of the Spanish treasure fleet or cutting off the Spanish trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>3</sup>

By October 1623, the *Heren XIX* settled upon what they described as a “Grand Design” to exert their influence in the Atlantic. First, Company troops would attack and capture the administrative capital Salvador de Bahia, perhaps the most profitable sugar region of Brazil. Next, a smaller expedition would launch from Bahia to capture the slave-trading port of Luanda in Angola in order to interrupt the Iberian slave trade. If successful, a fleet of reinforcements would work to capture portions of the Spanish treasure fleet in the Caribbean while another fleet attacked the Portuguese stronghold of São Jorge da Mina (Elmina) on the Gold Coast of Africa. With plan in hand an initial attack fleet set sail from the Dutch Republic during the winter of 1623-1624.<sup>4</sup>

The fleet arrived off the coast of Salvador de Bahia on May 8, 1624. Portuguese colonists, despite having heard rumors and reports of a Dutch attack, had done little to prepare themselves. Company troops quickly made their way ashore and seized the city of Bahia as the city’s residents fled into the *Recôncavo*, the hinterlands and main agricultural region surrounding the city. On May 10, after two days of battle and at the cost of several Company troops, the Portuguese governor-general of Bahia, Diogo Mendonça de Furtado, surrendered.<sup>5</sup>

Company control of Bahia was short lived. Dispersed in the surrounding agricultural regions of Bahia, the city’s former Portuguese citizens rallied around the local Catholic bishop, Dom Marcos Teixeira, who had fled alongside them in the wake of the Dutch attack. Teixeira organized a force of royal soldiers, city residents, sugar planters, and Tupi-speaking Indians from

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<sup>3</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 26-30; Knaap et al., *Oorlog en Overzee*, 272-273.

<sup>4</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 30-32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

a Jesuit missionary to push back the Company's advances. Portugal's indigenous allies proved central in the eventual success in taking back Bahia. The mission Indians set up ambushes to attack Company forces that ventured outside Bahia's city limits, and during one such ambush in June, they killed the Company's ground force commander, Colonel van Dorth. Van Dorth's death hampered additional expeditions into the interior and as a result the war settled into a stalemate with the Dutch in firm control of Bahia and Teixeira's forces established in the hinterland.<sup>6</sup>

News of the attack and resulting standstill reached Europe by summer of 1624. It was clear that the balance of Bahia would not be tipped unless the Company or Iberian powers sent relief and reinforcements. The Portuguese and Spanish overcame deep political discord and organized a joint relief expedition that set sail for Bahia from the Cape Verde Islands by mid-February 1625. The Company had more difficulty. Stormy weather and logistical issues delayed the Company's expedition by approximately two months. As a result, the Spanish-Portuguese forces sailed into Bahia at the end of March, quickly overcame the Company's forces in Bahia, and claimed the city on April 30. The Company had lost its claim in Brazil less than a year after arriving. The first phase of its "Grand Design" had failed.<sup>7</sup>

Subsequent attempts to carry out the plan's second and third phases failed just as spectacularly. The Company's reinforcements arrived in Bahia a month after its surrender and thus headed north to a bay near the border of the Paraíba and Rio Grande captaincies. The fleet took on fresh water and supplies. Those who had fallen ill during the Atlantic voyage tried to recover while Company leaders began to build a relationship with the local Potiguar. After a few weeks, the expedition split in half. One group launched a failed attack on Spanish Puerto Rico,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34-36.

while the other – under the command of vice-admiral Piet Heyn – sailed for the Gold Coast where it also failed to secure Luanda and Elmina after two separate attacks.<sup>8</sup>

The Company learned valuable lessons during its failed attempt to realize the “Grand Design.” Most importantly, they learned of Spain’s and Portugal’s vulnerabilities in Africa and the Americas that could be exploited at little to no cost. In Africa, due to a disinterested Spanish crown, the Portuguese lacked the necessary support to stave off Dutch forces along the Gold Coast. By 1630, the Company had seized this opportunity and emerged as a key player in the West African gold trade. In addition to gold, the Dutch exported ivory, wax, grain, and dye wood. While the Company initially shied away from entering into the slave trade due to its own lack of need and experience, this would change around 1633 once the Company had secured several sugar producing captaincies in Brazil.<sup>9</sup> The Company also maintained a maritime presence in the Caribbean and found profit through privateering and maritime predation. Armed galleons typically escorted the Spanish treasure fleet that carried gold and silver, but Spanish ships loaded with hides, tobacco, and dyes sailed relatively unarmed throughout the Caribbean. The Dutch naval hero Piet Heyn targeted these vessels with great success. In 1627, he captured more than 2,500 chests of sugar and the following year he famously captured a portion of the Spanish ‘silver fleet’ at Matanzas (Cuba). The profits from his attacks, estimated at 11.5 million guilders at the time, not only boosted Company morale but also provided a windfall of money that financed a new Company’s assault on Brazil.<sup>10</sup>

The second Company attack on Brazil targeted Pernambuco, a heavy sugar producing region to the north of Bahia. A fleet with 7,000 soldiers and sailors departed from the Dutch

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 37-38; Henk den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC: Opkomst, Bloei En Ondergang* (Zutphen, the Netherlands: Walburg Press, 2013), 70-71.

<sup>10</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 38; Den Heijer, “The Dutch West India Company, 1621-1791,” 92.

Republic in late 1629 and arrived off the coast of Brazil in February 1630. Company troops made quick work of securing Olinda and Recife while the Portuguese governor retreated into the countryside. The Company was determined not to fall into the same trap that doomed the 1624-1625 Bahia expedition and sent immediate reinforcements from the Dutch Republic. The Dutch also gained important local allies. Several hundred African slaves served the Company as scouts and soldiers and a local mulatto informant named Domingos Fernandes Calabar taught Company forces how to deploy guerrilla tactics against Portuguese encampments. In contrast, disagreements between the Spanish and Portuguese weakened their ability to respond with any significant show of force. Despite the Iberians' lack of resolve, it took the Company five years of sporadic and targeted attacks to force the hand of Pernambuco's governor who finally retreated to Bahia with his forces in the summer of 1635. During that time, the Dutch slowly expanded their power in the region. They took Fort Reis Magos – at the mouth of the Rio Grande – in 1633 and renamed it Fort Keulen. Then, with the help of Tarairiu allies, they seized captaincies stretching from Cabo de Santo Agostinho in the south to Rio Grande in the north.<sup>11</sup>

The Company launched a propaganda campaign to convince the remaining Portuguese planters or *moradores* to end the conflict. Company leaders promised the *moradores* economic benefits and religious freedom. This appeared to be enough to convince the *moradores* to commit to a cease-fire and end hostilities. By the end of 1635, the Company, through a combination of military advances and propaganda campaigns, had won over most of the *moradores*, solidified alliances with numerous indigenous groups, and gained control of Brazil's most important sugar districts.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 38-39; Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 36-37.

<sup>12</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 40; Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 37.

The joint-crown of Spain and Portugal did not sit idle upon hearing news of the Company's advances. By the end of 1635 they had organized and outfitted thirty warships to take back control of Brazil. Upon landing, the Iberian troops launched a guerrilla campaign against the Dutch using burnt earth tactics to inflict damage upon the Company's recently won sugar mills. The effect was immediate and by 1636 the Company's debt from lost revenue and military expenditures climbed to 18 million guilders.<sup>13</sup> The Company needed a new strategy and a new plan if they were to keep and profit from their newly won Brazilian properties.

The *Heren XIX* concluded that a strong, central leader could solve Brazil's pestering military and financial problems. Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), a German nobleman, fit the bill. Johan Maurits, in addition to being the grandnephew of stadholder Frederik Hendrik, had established himself as a keen military commander during the Dutch Revolt. The *Heren XIX* believed his military experience could be deployed to usher an end to Iberian attacks and as governor he could provide order to the chaotic, shared governing structure in place in Brazil. They consequently appointed him governor and supreme military and naval commander of northeastern Brazil in August 1636. He arrived in Recife the following January.<sup>14</sup>

Johan Maurits' military shrewdness began to shine almost immediately. A month after arriving, he organized and personally led an attack to drive out the Spanish forces remaining at Porto Calvo. The assault succeeded and the Iberian troops fled south over the Rio São Francisco in search of refuge in Bahia. The river became the southern border of Dutch Brazil, guarded by Company soldiers and indigenous allies. Johan Maurits attempted to push the border over the river a year later, but the attack failed miserably and at great cost in Company soldiers and

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<sup>13</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 40; Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 38.

<sup>14</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 40.

indigenous allies. Johan Maurits had better luck in the north. In 1637, a Company expedition secured a northern border after capturing Ceará, a Portuguese fort along the coast.<sup>15</sup>

Back on the Iberian Peninsula, political developments resulted in the disintegration of Iberia's united crown and temporarily halted the Company's expansion in Brazil. Beginning in 1634, three Portuguese gentlemen (*fidalgos*) gave voice to Portuguese disdain for Iberia's union of crowns and declared an oath to restore Portugal's independence. They succeeded in overthrowing the Spanish administration in December 1640. The end of Iberia's united crown led to negotiations between the Netherlands and Portugal aimed at creating an anti-Spanish alliance. In Brazil, an ominous sign foretold the developments in Spain. On November 13, 1640, a solar eclipse darkened the sky above Brazil. The Dutch chronicler Caspar van Baerle later recounted that while "the cause for this phenomenon is well known," for many the eclipse "raised their hopes." Denizens of the West India Company interpreted the blackout as a favorable metaphor for the "fall and extinction of Spain's glory in these regions" and "extolled Count Johan Maurits, who had diminished the bright splendor and honor of Spain's royal powers."<sup>16</sup>

Dutch and Portuguese leaders in Brazil agreed to temporarily suspend hostilities when news of Portugal's independence reached them in early 1641. The leaders recognized they now shared an enemy in Spain but neither was sure of what to expect of their own relationship going forward. Johan Maurits stalled and waited on instructions from the Dutch Republic.<sup>17</sup> The *Heren XIX* worried that a negotiated treaty with Portugal would end with the loss of tough-won Brazilian territories. They instructed Johan Maurits to launch an aggressive expansion campaign

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>16</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 190-192.

<sup>17</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 272-274; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 41-42.



to prevent such losses while they continued negotiations back in Europe. This marked a drastic change in the character of Dutch Brazil. Once risky endeavors and pursuits to expand the Company's presence were now seen as essential as the Dutch worked against time, hoping to acquire as much territory as possible before the Dutch concluded a treaty with Portugal.<sup>18</sup>

Johan Maurits' campaign to seize territory throughout Brazil and Africa proved successful. His first goal was to gain a foothold in the African slave trade. While the Company had long wavered on the issue of the transatlantic slave trade, Johan Maurits believed a steady supply of African labor essential to Dutch Brazil's success. He set his sights on the strategic Portuguese slave port in Luanda. The source of most of Portugal's and Spain's slave labor, Luanda exported Angolan and Congolese slaves believed to be more familiar with plantation agriculture than slaves from the Gold Coast. In May 1641, Johan Maurits sent an expedition force supported by 250 to 300 *Brasilianen* under the command of Cornelis Jol to capture the city. Several months later, Jol captured São Tomé, a Portuguese sugar-producing island and key transit stop in the Atlantic slave trade. Back in Brazil, Johan Maurits pushed the southern and northern borders of Dutch Brazil slightly forward. In the south, an expedition captured the captaincy of Sergipe and extended the Dutch border beyond the Rio São Francisco and in the north, a separate expedition capture the city of São Luis de Maranhão, both in 1641.<sup>19</sup>

The 1641 expeditions and conquests marked the Company's territorial zenith.<sup>20</sup> The Portuguese and the Dutch Republic signed an agreement in late 1641, followed a year later by a formal truce between Johan Maurits and the Portuguese in Bahia. Cease fires in Angola and São

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<sup>18</sup> Knaap et al., *Oorlogen Overzee*, 287.

<sup>19</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 42-43; For the attack on Luanda including Brazilian Indian forces, see "Letter Regarding the Attack on St. Paulo de Loanda" November 11, 1641, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv.nr. 5756: D.112-120.

<sup>20</sup> Knaap et al., *Oorlogen Overzee*, 288.

Tomé soon followed. Company officials were confident in their circumstances even though Portuguese grievances began pouring into the Dutch Republic that the Company's advances violated the terms of the final agreement. By 1664, the Company had a firm hold in Brazil and West Africa as well as in North America and, to some extent, the Caribbean. Believing the treaties would hold, the *Heren XIX* recalled Johan Maurits and many of his troops, and waited for the profits to flow.<sup>21</sup> Their enterprise, however, quickly began to crumble.

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<sup>21</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 43; Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 252.

#### 4. Rain & Drought in Maranhão

Casper van Baerle captured Dutch hopes for Brazil in a single sentence in 1647. The promise of Brazil, opined Van Baerle, centered on its supposed natural abundance and the readiness of its allegedly oppressed indigenous peoples to provide aid to their self-described Dutch liberators.<sup>22</sup> The grand dreams of Brazil also held true for Maranhão – a small island and captaincy along Brazil’s northeastern coast. Company employees ventured to Maranhão as early as 1623 and by 1640, the region’s healthy climate, fertile soils, salt and silver mines, and an abundance of indigenous peoples whose “aid and goodwill” could be applied in a variety of ways, captured the attention of Company leaders.<sup>23</sup> Maranhão’s geographic position made it an ideal point to defend against Spanish attacks and launch assaults against Portuguese trading vessels. A year later the Company launched a successful campaign to seize the region from the Portuguese.

The Company’s plans for the region could not have veered farther off course. Less than three years after Company soldiers arrived, the region’s indigenous population and climate had turned against them. The indigenous *Brasilianen*, spurred on by Portuguese propaganda and support, took advantage of a weather-beaten Dutch force to launch a violent resistance in 1642 that successfully forced the Company to abandon the region by April 1644.

Climate alone did not cause indigenous peoples to revolt against Dutch control in the 1640s. Instead, climate compounded the Natives’ tenuous conditions initiated by an era of European colonialism. Mission villages or *aldeias* lay at the heart of the *Brasilianen*’s ills. Originally established by French Jesuits, *Brasilianen* continued to live in mission villages under

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<sup>22</sup> Historians have offered a variety of explanations for the Netherlands’ interest in the New World and Brazil in particular. Benjamin Schmidt, using a wealth of historical pamphlets, provocatively enlists the Black Legend to pit ethically-motivated “innocent” Netherlanders against cruel “tyrannical” Spaniards who the Dutch saw as enacting the same devilish policies of control and submission on the indigenous peoples of the New World as they had perpetrated in the Netherlands prior to the Dutch Revolt, see: Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*.

<sup>23</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 217, 220.

subsequent Portuguese and Dutch control. Once confined, mission Indians became a reliable source of labor for colonial officials. Europeans forced the *Brasilianen* to work on salt flats and in sugar mills and tend to agricultural fields that fed both Company soldiers and Natives themselves. When extreme rains destroyed crop fields, the *Brasilianen*, who had been cut-off from their traditional subsistence practices, became dependent on colonial officials for daily food rations that were drawn from the Company's magazines. The *Brasilianen* became the first to suffer when weather-related crop failures and Company supply-line breakdowns caused food supplies to dwindle. The failure of Company officials to live up to their promises pushed the *Brasilianen* to join the Portuguese in a resistance against the Dutch.

Extreme weather did not differentiate between Europeans and Natives. Rains and droughts catalyzed a string of local-level decisions that enraged indigenous peoples and hindered the ability of Company leaders to address growing indigenous disdain for the Dutch. During the early 1640s, extreme weather events stretched Dutch commanders' abilities to supply and maintain garrisons at the fringes of the Company's expanding territory as well as at its core. As a result, Johan Maurits was forced to place his expansionist ambitions on hold. According to at least one contemporaneous Dutch writer, this hold pattern prevented the Company from capturing key agricultural regions that could have resolved the supply crisis.<sup>24</sup> Johan Maurits' orders precluded local leaders from advancing and tasked them with maintaining their positions with limited supplies. Local Company leaders in Maranhão responded to the growing subsistence crisis by ordering *Brasilianen* to work longer hours in order to increase food production. Maranhão's leaders did so despite their inability to uphold promises to pay the *Brasilianen* for

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<sup>24</sup> "Letter from Gideon Morris to Zeeland Chamber," April 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.154.

their work. As a result of these and other grievances, the *Brasilianen* joined the Portuguese in a violent resistance.

The two-pronged assault of extreme weather and indigenous resistance in Maranhão was a turning point in the Company's control of Brazil and its entire Atlantic enterprise. The Portuguese seized on the Company's supply crisis, its loss of Maranhão, and the departure of Johan Maurits in order "to transform their smoldering resentment against the hated heretics into action."<sup>25</sup> The Portuguese fed the flames of indigenous resistance and ignited a war against the Dutch to retake Brazil. Their efforts were rewarded nine years later when the Dutch ceded control of Brazil back to the Portuguese.

Profits drove Dutch interest in Maranhão, but money was not their sole motivation. Caspar van Baerle's 1647 publication *The History of Brazil*, based on sundry sources available to him in the Netherlands, described Maranhão in detail. According to Baerle, Maranhão was a pleasant and agreeable place. A southeasterly breeze made for a healthy climate and rid the land of mists and infectious miasmas. And while March, April, and May witnesses heavy rains the rest of the year remained calm. The hot climate only added to the fecundity of the land and yielded ample harvests of manioc, sugarcane, brazil wood, saffron, cotton, pepper, and tobacco.<sup>26</sup>

Baerle continued his history of Brazil with a description of the region's indigenous peoples. Baerle found the tall, sturdy, and supposedly cannibalistic *Brasilianen* perfectly suited to carry the heavy loads produced by Maranhão's fertile soils. In Baerle's mind, the *Brasilianen*'s deep hatred for both the Portuguese and Tapuyas – Portugal's indigenous allies – made them vital allies in the Company's pursuits in Brazil. Willem Usselinx, an early champion for a West Indian equivalent to the VOC, made a similar argument in 1608. Usselinx envisioned Brazil as

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<sup>25</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 162.

<sup>26</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 218-19.

one of several cash crop colonies. Riches and wealth, he argued, came not through mining silver and gold alone but instead in the aggregate trade of natural commodities such as sugar, indigo, dye woods, and cotton. Brazil stood foremost amongst potential sites that could make his vision a reality. To wrench these goods from Brazil's fertile soils, Usselincx, a fervent believer in the superiority of free labor over enslaved, intended that local Natives could one day be employed as voluntary paid laborers to work the fields.

Dutch nomenclature divided Brazil's supposedly willing indigenous peoples into two groups: *Brasilianen* and Tapuyas. The division perpetuated a false oversimplification of the diverse peoples of Brazil that the Portuguese had first established and the Dutch later adopted. In reality, the *Brasilianen* consisted of various Tupi-speaking peoples from coastal Brazil who had been gathered together by the Portuguese and placed in Jesuit-run missions during the sixteenth century. For this reason they were also referred to as *indios aldeados* or Indians of the *aldeias* (Jesuit mission villages). In contrast, the Tapuyas, a generic term for several tribes, resided further inland in the arid backcountry known as the *Sertão*. Regardless of the plurality of Brazil's indigenous groups, the Dutch believed that this dichotomy would allow them to exploit indigenous disregard for Portuguese rulers. Instead, these tribes, as seen on multiple occasions during the Netherlands' short-lived control over the Maranhão, continuously invoked their sovereignty to determine who to aid and when.<sup>27</sup>

The Dutch Republic's plans and policies for Maranhão's indigenous inhabitants failed to account for the region's turbulent climate and earlier colonial history.<sup>28</sup> Brazil's seasonal

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<sup>27</sup> For discussion of Northeast Brazil's indigenous peoples, see: Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 134-135; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 125; Knaap et al., *Oorlogen Overzee*, 364.

<sup>28</sup> Three climate dynamics interacted then as they do now to influence northeastern Brazil's short-term weather and long-term climate. The Maranhão's proximity to the equator, the South Atlantic anticyclone, and the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) all caused variations in the region's season and inter-annual precipitation. The South Atlantic anticyclone, a high-pressure zone that is in almost continuous operation, quells most storms, and produces drought conditions throughout northeastern Brazil. The ITCZ, which shifts seasonally, brings wind and

fluctuations between heavy rains during the first half of the year and drought in the second half had important and lasting repercussions on the Netherlands' colonial ambitions. The most prevalent concern to soldiers and officers was a lack of food. Reports of inadequate food supply and exhausted magazines pepper the archival records of Brazil. A combination of operational failures, poor Company planning, and extreme weather caused the shortages. Drought left crops desiccated while heavy rains caused them to rot; both situations led to meager harvests, reduced rations, and hungry personnel. Heavy rains also negatively impacted the quantity of salt and sugar ready to be shipped – all to the detriment of already marginal profits. Exceptionally heavy rain battered hastily built or shoddily repaired fortifications – damages that required the attention of the too-few carpenters and under-manned garrisons. Extreme weather, however, also had impacts of which most observers were unaware. Drought correlated with the outbreak of smallpox epidemics including a 1642 epidemic that struck Maranhão. While the origin of this particular outbreak has more to do with the movement of individuals between villages and the spread of the disease amongst Indians in confined mission villages, extreme weather might have increased its intensity.<sup>29</sup> Climate-induced famines led to higher rates of indigenous malnourishment that would have compromised indigenous immune systems and made them more vulnerable to disease.

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rain. This exhibits itself mainly in the form of heavy rainfall from December to May (during austral summer and autumn when it is in a more southerly position in relation to the equator) and then little to no rainfall from August to December when the ITCZ shifts northward. The ITCZ is itself affected by El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events. During positive or warm-phase El Niño events the ITCZ shifts north earlier, exacerbating water deficits in the south through an increase in wind and decrease in precipitation. See: Patrick A. Hesp, Luiz P. Maia, and Vanda Claudino-Sales, "The Holocene Barriers of Maranhão, Piauí and Ceará States, Northeastern Brazil," *Geology and Geomorphology of Holocene Coastal Barriers of Brazil* 107 (2009): 326-27. Boxer correlates the start of rainy season in Pernambuco to March-April with an end in July-August, see: Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 72, 163.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent example of colonial processes and epidemic diseases, see: Paul Kelton, *Epidemics & Enslavement: Biological Catastrophe in the Native Southeast, 1492-1715* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

Extreme weather's ability to impact societies cannot be divorced from a society's social and cultural context. In the case of the Maranhão, turbulent interactions with the French and later the Portuguese profoundly shaped the region's indigenous societies. In 1594, several ships including a French corsair ran aground off Brazil's northeastern coast. The shipwrecked French made their way to dry land where they encountered a group of Tupinambá who had migrated from Pernambuco to Maranhão after the Portuguese arrived there in the 1590s. Upon their return to France, the Frenchmen's earlier interactions spurred them to later champion a colony in Maranhão. In 1612, after receiving a royal charter to do so, several ships sailed to claim Maranhão for France. The French made haste to convert the local indigenous population to Catholicism and planned to expand their conquest in the region. The Tupinambá, according to French accounts, eagerly welcomed the French and jumped at the chance to parlay their new European connections into an attack on the Camarapin – their enemies who dwelled in “huts built on stilts in the marshy islands at the mouth of the [Maranhão] river.”<sup>30</sup>

The Portuguese soon joined the French in an imperial competition for Maranhão. The Portuguese had begun expanding into the northeast from their base of operations in Pernambuco several years before France laid claim to Maranhão. By 1612, the Portuguese had firmly established control in Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte – lands occupied by the Potiguar – and were marching west towards Ceará. France's arrival in Maranhão propelled the Portuguese to double their efforts.

The Tobajara residing in Ceará's Ibiapaba hills stood between the Portuguese marching from the east and the French and the Tupinambá residing in Maranhão. In 1603, the Portuguese sent Pero Coelho de Sousa and a force of 65 Portuguese and 200 indigenous allies into Ceará.

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<sup>30</sup> John Hemming, *Red Gold: The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians* (Southampton, UK: Macmillan, 1978), 198-206.



His troops had to overcome hunger and resilient Ibiapaba tribes, but the Portuguese ultimately succeeded in forcing thirty villages to submit to their rule. The Portuguese's colonization attempts quickly fizzled out, however, when a drought struck Ceará in 1616. The dry spell killed several Portuguese farmers and pushed the survivors to abandon the colony. A Jesuit mission soon followed Coelho de Sousa's failed colonization effort. Two missionaries tasked with converting the Tobajara tribes of the Ibiapaba hills traveled to Ceará in January 1607. Using gifts of tools and clothing, Francisco Pinto and Luís Figueria succeeded in converting several Tobajara, but failed to convert Gê-speaking tribes including the Cariri and Tacariju. The Tacariju doubted the missionaries' motives and attacked the two men on January 11, 1608. They killed Pinto while Figueria hid in the woods. After the killing, Figueria buried his friend and returned to Rio Grande.<sup>31</sup>

In the end, the Portuguese succeeded in taking Ceará not with guns or gospel, but with the open hand of Martím Soares Moreno. Martím Soares was a young Portuguese officer with a deep interest in the customs, culture, and language of Brazil's indigenous peoples. His friendship with the indigenous peoples of Ceará allowed the Portuguese to expand to the Camocim River, 250 miles from Maranhão and within striking distance of France's newly founded colony. Early in October of 1608, King Philip ordered the attack.<sup>32</sup>

Portuguese efforts to expel the French in Maranhão relied heavily upon indigenous support. The Portuguese allied with the Potiguar, negotiated with indigenous chiefs in Rio Grande, rallied the support of some 370 mission Indians, and brokered an alliance with the Tobajara and the Tremembé (a Tapuya tribe that dwelled off the coast of Maranhão near the Paraíba River). Portugal's indigenous allies provided soldiers, food, weapons, and intelligence.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 207-209.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 209-210.

Meanwhile, the French could only muster the assistance of the Tupinambá. Though even this relationship appeared fragile. One Tupinambá shaman prophesied against the French that “I will make the roots in their garden die, so that they will die of hunger.”<sup>33</sup>

In August 1614, the Portuguese set sail to attack the newly built French fort of St. Louis on the island of Maranhão. Though outnumbered against a force consisting of 400 French soldiers and 2000 Natives, the Portuguese launched a surprise attack on the fort on November 19 that left 90 French and 400 Indians dead. More importantly, the Portuguese attack convinced France’s Tupinambá allies to switch their alliance. A year later after a year-long truce expired, the Portuguese attacked again and the French surrendered.<sup>34</sup>

The Portuguese moved to consolidate their control in Maranhão to the detriment of the Tupinambá. While Portuguese Jesuits, under the leadership of Luís Figuera, assumed control of the twenty-seven former French Franciscan missions on the island of Maranhão, Portuguese commanders pushed into the countryside. The Portuguese encountered several indigenous tribes during their efforts but poor Portuguese leadership led to weak relations. The fragile relations shattered in 1617 after a Jesuit-trained Indian courier claimed that one of the letters he carried detailed Portuguese plans to enslave the Tupinambá. In order to prevent their own enslavement, the Tupinambá attacked the Portuguese at Tapuitapera (near São Luís) and launched a three-year offensive against Portuguese encroachment. In 1619, after multiple attacks and counterattacks, a new Portuguese governor, Jerónimo Fragoso de Albuquerque, along with a ruthless Portuguese woodsman, Bento Maciel Parente, had had enough. Individually, they systematically hunted down the mainland Tupinambá. Several Tupinambá survivors migrated and joined other tribes, while others surrendered and were put to work on Portuguese settlements. The Portuguese spared

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 210-212.

the Tupinambá on Maranhão who had maintained an allegiance to the Portuguese throughout the war. The Portuguese could not, however, protect their indigenous allies from the ravishing damages wrought by colonial diseases. In 1621, smallpox entered the missions of São Luís and quickly spread through the 27 villages.<sup>35</sup>

The Tupinambá who survived the devastation of smallpox lived only to be forced into slave-like working conditions by Portuguese planters. The Portuguese planters argued that African slaves were too expensive and instead relied upon Native labor. The Portuguese acquired Indian slaves through slaving expeditions along the Amazon River and from the missions. As a result of enslavement, by 1636 the villages of Maranhão and Tapuitapera had been reduced from almost two thousand bowmen to less than five hundred and only ten of the original 27 *aldeia* remained.<sup>36</sup>

The tense relationships between Maranhão's indigenous population and the Portuguese explains the Natives' initial willingness to embrace Dutch Company forces. The Company put their plan to take Maranhão into effect in October of 1641. Their principle objective was the city of São Luís located on the island of Maranhão. Admiral Jan Cornelis Lichthart and Colonel Johan van Kühn (Coin), both experienced military commanders, led the assault. Armed with eight months of provisions, the leaders planned to first stop in Ceará in order to gather supplies, find a Portuguese pilot capable of navigating the little-known territory, and enlist "Brasilianen or others" to serve in the attack. Their orders also stipulated that they were to enlist the help of Gideon Morris to "make contractual alliances with the Indians living between Ceará and Maranhão," presumably in Comestij.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 212-216.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 217-222.

<sup>37</sup> "Secret Instructions for Admiral-Lieutenant Lichthart, Colonel Van Kühn, and Pieter Bas Concerning Conquest of Maranhão," October 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.243. For description of the fleet, see:

Lichthart's and Kühn's orders gave specific instructions on how to interact with Maranhão's indigenous population. Once the Company had seized their objective, the *Brasilianen* from Ceará would be allowed to return to their homes while the local "Indian Nations" would be granted full freedom. While the Council in Recife advised this measure in order to secure their assistance in later conflicts and to ensure that the city would "enjoy the merits and benefits" of the land, their wording implies a more calculated and profit-oriented motive. Once given their freedom, the Council hoped that these indigenous peoples would serve as laborers so as to prevent the colony from becoming an "uncultivated and unprofitable possession" owing to the region's "lack of slaves." The orders reiterated this point stating that Natives would be granted full freedom "in order to better cultivate the land." While the Company's local garrison would benefit from indigenous cultivation of manioc, Company employees were prohibited from holding either Indians or Africans as slaves, except those bought directly from the Company. A single adult African male, a single African women, or three African children would be sold at 40 gulden. Indians would be sold at half the African rate.<sup>38</sup>

The Dutch attack fleet faced a torrent of troubles before ever arriving in Maranhão. A storm battered the convoy while it was still en route to Ceará. Strong waves snapped lines and caused many ships to abandon their anchors. Making matters worse, either due to the strong winds, navigational error, or a combination of both, the fleet overshot Ceará by nearly 30 miles. They realized their mistake when Gideon Morris sailed to the distressed fleet to tell them. Morris also

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"Letter from Lichthart, Kühn, and Bas to Governor-General," December 3, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.297. Morris had earlier suggested that the *Brasilianen* around Comestij would be open to making an alliance with the Company, see: "Letter from Gideon Morris in Ceará Concerning the Opportunities in Maranhão," August 23, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69. For more on the fleet, see: "Provisions for the Fleet," September 12, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>38</sup> "Secret Instructions for Admiral-Lieutenant Lichthart, Colonel Van Kühn, and Pieter Bas Concerning Conquest of Maranhão," October 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.243. For policy to employ *Brasilianen* in Maranhão in cultivation of fields, see: "Letter from Governor-General and Council to the Heren XIX Concerning the Conquest of Maranhão," January 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.90.

came bearing additional bad news. He could only spare some 70 *Brasilianen* from Ceará, a number considerably less than requested, due in part to an outbreak of smallpox and the need for indigenous labor in Ceará's nearby saltpans. He did, however, manage to gain the support of a few Tapuya and *Brasilianen* in Comestij, who brought the total indigenous fighting force to 80.<sup>39</sup>

The Company fleet finally arrived at Maranhão on November 25, 1641 and quickly took control of the island. Two Dutch ships, the *Tijger* and the *Wildeboer*, sustained damages en route to the landing site, but suffered only a single wounded man each. These would be the only casualties in the assault. The Portuguese did not put up any opposition. Instead, when the fleet landed, two Portuguese representatives approached Lord Colonel Kühn and requested the Dutch enter into negotiations with the Portuguese governor of São Luís, Bento Maciel Parente. Kühn agreed.<sup>40</sup>

News of Maranhão's capture reached Recife early in January along with a copy of the final agreement reached between Company commanders and Parente.<sup>41</sup> In the accord, Parente protested the Company's right to attack and possess Maranhão. He had received news of a peace agreement between Portugal and the Netherlands stating that neither country could attack the other. As a result, the accord acted more as a temporary cease-fire than a full surrender. It put the Dutch in charge of the fort, stripped the Portuguese of their weapons and ammo, and afforded the Portuguese the right to stay in the fort until a proper settlement could be concluded by Johan

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<sup>39</sup> "Letter from Lichthart, Kühn, and Bas to the Governor-General and Council," December 3, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.297.

<sup>40</sup> "Redress and Claim by Governor Bento Parente to Kühn, Lichthart, and Bas," November 25, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.301.

<sup>41</sup> "News of the Seizure of Maranhão Arrives," January 8, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

Maurits and the High Council.<sup>42</sup> The Company also allowed Portuguese planters to maintain possession of their property. A move that various Company officials later sharply criticized.<sup>43</sup>

Kühn and Lichthart reported to the High Council that Maranhão's indigenous peoples had quickly submitted to Company control. The commanders calculated that about 300 *Brasilianen*, living in three separate mission villages, resided on the island and that these Natives had shown honesty and full contentment towards the Dutch. Approximately 25 additional Native households resided in two additional *aldeias* in Tipuitapere. These Natives lived a humble existence in what they described as a "simple place" – producing only enough farina, tobacco, and wool to meet their own needs. Each of these groups, along with the Native inhabitants of Tapicuru, appeared before the Dutch commander and requested to be "taken under their protection."<sup>44</sup> The Dutch commanders agreed and issued orders regarding the future treatment of these indigenous peoples. "No Brasilianen or anyone from an Indian tribe could be bound into slavery" and additionally "they would enjoy the same right to freedom as any Dutch."<sup>45</sup> In doing so, Kühn and Lichthart imitated a similar policy used by Johan Maurits to solicit the support and service of Natives living in Ceará.<sup>46</sup>

The Company employed their *Brasilianen* allies in a wide range of agricultural and militaristic occupations. Foremost, the Company employed Native warriors as mercenaries to support the Company's territorial ambitions and many received wages for their military service.

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<sup>42</sup> "Redress and Claim by Governor Bento Parente to Kühn, Lichthart, and Bas," November 25, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.301; Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 218.

<sup>43</sup> "Letter from Governor-General to Heren XIX," January 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.90. See also Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 232. For more on Dutch policy of cohabitation see: Alison Games, "Cohabitation, Suriname-Style: English Inhabitants in Dutch Suriname after 1667," *William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 2 (April 2015): 195–242.

<sup>44</sup> "Letter from Lichthart, Kühn, and Bas to Governor-General and Council," December 3, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.297.

<sup>45</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 220. See also: "Letter from Baltasar van de Voorde to the Zeeland Chamber," January 14, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.143.

<sup>46</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 220.

During times of peace, the Company's indigenous allies cut wood, wrangled cattle, and drove carts as hired-out laborers in the employ of Portuguese settlers (*moradores*). They also played an important role in hunting down escaped runaway slaves and cultivating manioc. For the most part, the *Brasilianen* spent their time cultivating crops and engaging in military skirmishes.<sup>47</sup>

Company leaders quickly went to work to determine whether their conquest would be profitable. Kühn took inventory of the fort and began exploring the surrounding area. He found 55 canons, a good quantity of powder, and a bit of wine that was quickly consumed. A total of 45 enemy ships of various sizes were found, seized, and put into the employment of the Company. Only six working mills and three unfinished mills of lesser value were found on or near the island. Together, Kühn estimated the mills could produce approximately 600 chests of sugar per year. To expedite profits the commanders entered into a contract for a total of 300 chests of sugar with the "Lords of the Ingenios" in Tapicuru. They sent an additional three ships to Barbados and St. Christopher Island to search for any profitable goods that might be found there. As for the salt pans that had been touted to exist in Maranhão, unidentified sources alluded that the pans were not yet prepared, but could be put into service with a little money and effort so that the Company could expect at least some profit.<sup>48</sup>

The commanders concluded that about 600 men should be left behind in order to secure the Company's newly-acquired outpost.<sup>49</sup> Company leaders, however, would have a hard time justifying the expense of maintaining so many men. A sizable quantity of rations had been offloaded from the initial attack's support ships in order to support the remaining troops prior to

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<sup>47</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade*, 157-158. For the use of *Brasilianen* in cultivation of crops throughout Dutch Brazil, see: "Remonstrance by Schout Listri Commander of the *Brasilianen* given to the Council," February 17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>48</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 218. "Letter from Lichthart, Kühn, and Bas to Governor-General and Council," December 3, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.297.

<sup>49</sup> "Letter from Lichthart, Kühn, and Bas to Governor-General and Council," December 3, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.297.

their return to Recife. Spanish wine, brandy, oil, vinegar, meat, speck, stockfish, rye flour, farina, peas, beans, boards, and a bit of bread should have sufficed until additional rations could be sent.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, upon inspection, Commissioner J. Sichvriet found that the wet rations had reached precariously low levels and much of the dry rations had spoiled.<sup>51</sup> Just over a month after arriving, the Company's magazines had already begun to deteriorate. Supplies, tools, rations, and medicine necessary for the fortification, maintenance, and defense of the fort were urgently needed if the Company wanted to maintain its grip on Maranhão.<sup>52</sup>

Maranhão was not alone in its desperate need for provisions. Reports from throughout Dutch-controlled regions of Brazil flooded into Recife during 1642. Local commanders bemoaned the scarcity of provisions, a sober state, and a great hunger. As early as May, outposts in Rio Grande, Paraíba, Sergipe, Rio San Francisco, Porto Calvo, and as far away as St. Thomé repeatedly petitioned the Council in Recife requesting flour, bacon, and meat. The Council agreed to arrange provisions for those place which "could not obtain their necessities from the land" so far as the "state of our magazines can bear." The Company, however, often bore much less than what the outposts required. Two months later, as the dry season set in, additional requests began arriving from Sergipe del Rey and Rio Grande with letters continuing to arrive until the end of the year from Recife, Itamarica, and Maranhão.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "List of Dry and Wet Provisions offloaded in Maranhão," December 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.223; "Receipt of Goods delivered in Maranhão," December 24, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.224.

<sup>51</sup> "Letter from Commissioner Sichvriet to Governor-General and Council, December 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.220; "List of Ammunition and Goods Still Available in Maranhão," December 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.221.

<sup>52</sup> "Memorandum concerning the Necessary Medications in Maranhão," December 28, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.222; "List of Necessary Goods and Tools in Maranhão," December 26, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.225.

<sup>53</sup> "Letter from Jan Claessen Cock in St. Thome to Governor-General and Council," May 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.131; "Letter from Hans van Haus, Commander in Sergipe del Rey to Governor-General Johan Maurits," May 20, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.161; "Extract from a Letter from Andreas Philts, Director of Porto Calvo to Governor-General and Council," June 17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.162; "Scarcity of Provisions in Rio Grande, Paraíba, Seripe del Rey, Rio St Francisco, Porto Calvo, Etc." July 22, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Lack of Provisions in Seripe del Rey" September 18, 1642, NA, OWIC,



Despite the Council's desire to resupply desperate outposts, their magazines continuously ran on thin margins. The "chronic lack of supplies and provisions" led one admiral to later described Recife as a "starvation corner."<sup>54</sup> Johan Maurits and the High Council took the supply crisis seriously. Johan Maurits "frequently voiced complaints about the inadequate supply of food," which "place the country at risk of starvation and ruin if provisions were not made in time."<sup>55</sup>

The High Council worked proactively to resolve the situation. Early in January 1642, the Council requested that the *Heren XIX* send additional "soldiers, sailors, *treijnpersoonen*, provisions, medications, material, and other necessary equipment" as soon as possible. The quantity of each, they demanded, should be at levels sufficient to meet the needs demanded by the newly-acquired outposts of Sergipe, São Thomé, and Maranhão.<sup>56</sup>

The Company's needs quickly depleted their magazine. By June 1642, the Company had consumed the magazine's meat supply and most other provisions had reached precariously low levels.<sup>57</sup> Despite frequent requests to *patria*, the situation still had not improved by August.<sup>58</sup> Making matters worse, August witnessed a rise in the cost of an *alquere* (bushel) of farinha (flour made from manioc) from six schellings to nine. Some suppliers asked 14 to 16 schellings. The Council refused to pay this exorbitant price.<sup>59</sup> By September, the Company's magazines were "at their end" and the Company only had enough rations for eight more days. Money was worthless,

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1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Scarcity in Rio Grande" September 26, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Scarcity of Provisions in Captaincy of Itamarica" October 13, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas, Godefroy Doorschot, Cornelis Ruijs Brant Berensen and Willem Negentoon, in St. Luis, to Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council," October 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.42.

<sup>54</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 220-221.

<sup>55</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 228.

<sup>56</sup> "Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," January 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.144. See also: Johannes Nieuuhof, *Gedenkwaardige Brasiliaense Zee- En Lant- Reize* (Amsterdam, 1682), 64.

<sup>57</sup> "Stockfish Bought & Low Rations in the Magazine" June 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>58</sup> "Scarcity of Farinha" August 19, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>59</sup> "Scarcity of Farinha" August 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

the Council lamented, since there was no food to buy. Officials worried that if the situation continued, soldiers would begin plundering homes and wreaking havoc throughout the countryside.<sup>60</sup>

The Company had faced shortages in Brazil before. During the early attacks of 1630 and 1631, both the Portuguese and Dutch suffered from malnutrition. According to historian C.R. Boxer, the Dutch, “at one period being reduced to eating cats and rats, while the Portuguese soldiers received as their daily ration a single spike of maize each.” Boxer attributes the difficulties to the Netherlands’ inexperience in “tropical warfare,” while the Portuguese authorities in Lisbon were contending with multiple troubles beyond Brazil including a three year drought-induced famine in Portugal.<sup>61</sup> Shortages persisted with requests for assistance continuing to arrive in the Netherlands in 1632 and 1634.<sup>62</sup> The difference in 1641 and 1642 was that the shortages came at a punctuation point for Dutch expansion in the region. A time when the company wanted to expand its hold throughout the Atlantic world. Without necessary supplies, the expansion would come to a screeching halt.

The Company’s outposts grew to depend on Recife’s magazine, but the Company’s ability to meet those demands grew increasingly difficult. Following news of the Company’s victory in Maranhão, the Council, “having suppressed our wills,” begrudgingly agreed to send eight months of provisions for 250 people.<sup>63</sup> Sending much needed supplies to far off places, though, came with immediate push-back from Recife’s European settlers. One colonist, Pieter van Der

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<sup>60</sup> “Council Deliberation to Obtain Farinha for the Garrisons,” September 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>61</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 41, 54.

<sup>62</sup> “Request for Subsidies to Brazil,” March 31, 1632, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5753; “Letter Declaring Low Rations and Immediate Need of Assistance,” August 30, 1634, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5753.

<sup>63</sup> “Lettre from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” January 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.144.

Haghen, complained explicitly about the Council's administration of rations. He simply stated that the handling of the magazines was "very bad" and characterized its manager as a "*bloetien*," roughly translated as a nitwit. Adriaen van Bullestraten, a member of the High Council, did little to help the situation. He ordered the purchase of farinha, which he declared to be of "no value," and then sold it at 16 schellings. And at least in Van Der Haghen's estimation, the flour Bullestrate did send to the outposts was "not fit for baking."<sup>64</sup>

The Council devised a variety of solutions throughout the year to remedy the colony's persistent supply problems. The immediate and rational solution was to plead to the *Heren XIX* for immediate assistance since the *Heren XIX* had previously agreed to ration the colony. A resolution dated June 20, 1640 stated that every ship heading to Brazil would be loaded with 18 *lasten* of rye flour and two *lasten* of wheat flour. The resolution also stipulated that every Company ship would be provided nine months of provisions. This, however, was far too much for the Company to supply. Six months later, in December, they decreased the provisioning to 12 *lasten* of rye flour and a single *lasten* of wheat. Brazil's High Council worried how they would be able to support the Company's expanding presence. The Company now controlled territories in Brazil and Africa that stretched from Maranhão to Sergipe del Rey and across the Atlantic to St. Paulo in Angola. Any new ships, the High Council replied, must be fully supplied, "because we suffer shortages here and it is not possible for us to provide the support needed for such distant places." To emphasize their desperation, they added that ships that "cannot support themselves will fall into the enemy's hands."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Letter from Pieter van Der Haghen to Pieter Cornelis van Houten," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.107.

<sup>65</sup> The actual resolutions for these years no longer exist in the archives; however, for references to the resolutions, see: "Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123, fol. 23-24. See also Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 149.

Desperate need for provisions became a common refrain in the High Council's reports. According to Balthasar van de Voorde, "Everything here is beginning to dissipate, flour...is now sold at high prices, there is little Brazilian farinha and what exists is extremely expensive, if the ships from the Fatherland linger any longer, we shall fall into great disrepair."<sup>66</sup> The Council reiterated the importance of sending provisions, medication, and ammunition not only to support "our Garrisons in Brazil," but also the Company's newest conquests in Africa including Luanda and São Thomé.<sup>67</sup> In June, after reviewing an inventory of rations which showed "everything lacking," the Council ordered provisions for 6000 men for 12 months.<sup>68</sup>

The High Council's requests, while not necessarily falling on deaf ears, could not be fulfilled. The Company's increasing financial disarray prevented them from provisioning Recife. Unfortunately, Brazil had come to depend upon the Dutch Republic almost exclusively. This was an unintended consequence of a battle pitted between free-traders and monopolists during the 1630s. C.R. Boxer explains that "fortunes were made by merchants who imported European provisions and manufactured goods which they sold or exchanged for sugar; but these fortunes were made by private traders for the most part."<sup>69</sup> This upset Company officials and employees who saw the unfair accumulation of wealth by those who had not fought to conquer Brazil. In 1634, the Company sided with the monopolists and issued an edict that reserved the Company's exclusive right on the export of provisions, munitions, and dyewood. They reversed this decision in 1638 in an effort to overcome their own financial shortcomings. Now the Company maintained a privilege only on slaves, dye woods, and munitions. Everything else could be

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<sup>66</sup> "Letter from Baltasar van de Voorde to the Zeeland Chamber," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.9, fol. 2-3.

<sup>67</sup> "Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX." April 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.153.

<sup>68</sup> "Stockfish Bought & Scarcity in Magazine," June 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>69</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 76.

openly traded, although the Company did institute a license system that required all merchants to be shareholders in the Company. The debate, however, would continue to rage until August 1648 when the Company opened trade completely. As a result of this changing policy and the Company's inadequate financial resources, shipments that arrived in Brazil usually fell far short of requested amounts and arrived instead "in bits and pieces."<sup>70</sup>

Unable to secure a reliable stream of supplies from the Dutch Republic, the High Council implemented additional measures to acquire provisions. They first tried to purchase provisions locally. In June, due to a shortage of meat in the magazines, the High Council granted commissary Sweerts permission to purchase three to four thousand pounds of stockfish to provision outgoing ships.<sup>71</sup> The same month, the Council moved to replace rations of potspijse with farinha.<sup>72</sup> The next month the Council notified the ships in Porto Calvo to purchase 800 bushels of farinha and send it to Recife "for the support of the soldiers and citizens where there is a great shortage."<sup>73</sup> A similar appeal was made the following month, this time for 600 bushels of farinha from Iguaracú.<sup>74</sup> In September, the Council gave Luis Gomes 1000 guilders to purchase farinha in St. Laurens and transport it back to Recife. For his services, his family was granted a reprieve from the dues (*reverantie*) of farinha.<sup>75</sup>

Simply ordering the purchase of farinha, however, did not ensure a ready supply. Many of the Council's orders went unfilled. Manioc, from which farinha is produced, is typically planted in northeastern Brazil early in the rainy season (December through January) and can be harvested

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<sup>70</sup> "Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX." February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123, fol. 24. For an overview of the debate between monopolists and free trade advocates, see: Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 76-82, 221

<sup>71</sup> "Stockfish Bought & Low Rations in the Magazine," June 16, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>72</sup> "Farinha Replaces Potspijse," June 3, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>73</sup> "Farinha to Be Bought in Porto Calvo and Sent to Recife," July 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>74</sup> "Scarcity of Farinha in Iguaracú," August 19, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>75</sup> "Purchase of Farinha from St. Laurens," September 29, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

nine to twelve months later (September through October).<sup>76</sup> In times of need, farmers could harvest smaller portions as early as six months (June through July) and in times of plenty up to eighteen months later.<sup>77</sup> The Council expected the supply of farinha to surge by September 1642 at the start of the harvest season when they hoped to once again purchase farinha at nine schelling per bushel.<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, no such bounty came. News arrived from *Serinhais* (Sirinhaém) in Pernambuco in September that “the district had been able to make enough farinha to support their own garrisons, but not enough to send to [Recife].”<sup>79</sup> Similar news arrived from Bahia in December.<sup>80</sup> Concerned that “currently no place” was producing enough farinha “to ration the garrisons,” the Council continued to look elsewhere for a food supply and sent out orders that any farinha that “exceeds the needed rations for soldiers in outposts should be sent [to Recife].”<sup>81</sup>

The supply shortages of 1642 moved the Council to make a concerted effort to encourage local cultivation to abate the current crisis and create a long-term solution. In December 1641, “with the time to plant for the coming year at hand,” the Council ordered placards posted so that an “abundance of farinha be planted” to “prevent an extreme of famine” if the scarcity of provisions from *patria* or the “infertility of the land continued another year.”<sup>82</sup> They renewed the placards in January.<sup>83</sup> Placards included specific requirements detailing exactly how much

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<sup>76</sup> “Order to Plant Farinha” December 18, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>77</sup> Philip M. Fearnside, “Agricultural Practices, Problems, & Prospects for Annual Crops in Use on the Transamazon Highway” (University of Michigan, October 20, 1975), 17-22.

<sup>78</sup> For September expectations see: “Scarcity of Farinha” August 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69. For discussion of farinha prices, see: “Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” September 29, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.32, fol. 18-20.

<sup>79</sup> “Scarcity of Farinha in Sirinhaém & Recife,” September 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>80</sup> “Arrival of Blauwe Kas from Bahia without Farinha,” December 9, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>81</sup> “Remonstrance and Ordinance Concerning Magazine Distribution,” September 5, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>82</sup> “Order to Plant Farinha due to the Scarcity of Shipments from the Fatherland,” December 18, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>83</sup> “Renewal of Notice Concerning the Planting of Farinha,” January 10, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

farinha should be planted. In February 1642, this amounted to “five hundred *covas de Mandioca*” for every African slave a planter possessed and an additional thousand for all other inhabitants. The renewed placards were “emanated, charged and ordered to all the possessions which fall under our obedience” and the High Council ordered that “all courts of magistrates...publicize and post” the accords so that no individual could claim “ignorance.”<sup>84</sup> Due to the “large scarcity of farinha which one currently sees in these conquests,” failure to meet these requirements would result in apprehension, litigation, fines, and punishment. While the Council believed that “harsh punishment” was the only means to exact their orders, many planters still preferred to concentrate their efforts on the more lucrative sugar fields.<sup>85</sup>

The Council continued to worry about the prolongation of a food shortage. In March 1642, a lengthy Council discussion resulted in the renewal and elaboration of the placards. The Council attributed a continual increase in the price of farinha to the disobedience of the placards, the “former bad crops,” and the “small output from the Netherlands.” In order to mitigate future price increases, the Council forbid hoarding of farinha and declared that individuals should only maintain enough farinha to “support their family and laborers.” In addition, the Council extended the reach of the placards and included orders to “promote an increase in the multiplication of cattle.” No one would be allowed “to carry out the slaughter of any cows, calves, or oxen” unless the animal became “unfit due to old age or injury.”<sup>86</sup>

The placards, though benign in nature, were not hollow threats. *Schouts*, an administrative position combining the roles of sheriff and prosecutor, visited districts throughout Dutch Brazil

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<sup>84</sup> “Notice to Plant Farinha Renewed and Revised,” February 4, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>85</sup> “Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” April 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.153. For efforts to encourage agricultural production, see also: Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 149.

<sup>86</sup> “Documents Concerning Notices for Planting of Farinha,” March 20, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69. In January 1642, the Council passed a similar act restricting Jews from purchasing farinha for purposes of creating a monopoly, see: “Act against Jews Monopolizing Farinha,” January 31, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

to ensure planters obeyed the placards. Though the regularity of their visits is unclear, *schouts* typically visited as a result of unfulfilled quotas. This was the case in August 1642 when the High Council request the *schout* of Igaracú visit the Parish of St. Amaro following complaints that the residents “could no longer provide farinha to the Company in support of the garrisons.” In addition to checking that the residents had planted farinha according to orders, the High Council requested the *schout* ensure that residents had taken all means to ensure that those in Recife “may obtain a good quantity of farinha.”<sup>87</sup> Another *schout* reported the same day that he had “visited all the farinha plantings throughout the entire district of Maúrits and found that all conformed to the latest emanated order, yet no one could have a complete crop before the upcoming month of January and that the manioc was extraordinarily damaged.”<sup>88</sup> Some areas requested a reduction or delay in farinha quotes to avoid potential fines associated with *schout* visits. In June 1642, a message arrived from *Serinhais* (Sirinhaém) in Pernambuco requesting “a liberation from farinha in support of the garrisons there for a time of four to five months” so that their crops might reach maturity since harvesting too early would result in “significant damage” to the crop.<sup>89</sup>

Increasing the size of arable land remained yet another option for remedying the persistent food shortages. In Recife, the focus of agricultural expansion fell upon Alagoas, an area lying between Pernambuco to the north and Sergipe to the south. Alagoas had become a prosperous sugar producing region by 1642, but Johan Maurits and the High Council became convinced that it could also produce subsistence crops in support of the colony in general. In fact, they believed

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<sup>87</sup> “Igaracú not able to support garrisons with Farinha” August 26, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>88</sup> “Report over the Visit to Farinha Fields in Maurits,” August 26, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>89</sup> “Request for a delay in Sirinhaém,” June 12, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.



that “populating the Alagoas...to be the only remedy to set these lands outside of famine.”<sup>90</sup>

They double-downed on this proposition after hearing that the Portuguese before them had never been able to support themselves except through outside support from Portugal. As such, Johan Maurits prepared to travel to Alagoas in order to survey and evaluate its agricultural potential.<sup>91</sup> Yet, despite repeated petitions to seize the region, the financially conservative members of the *Heren XIX* refused to support the conquest and the “projects came to nothing.”<sup>92</sup>

Similar expansionist appeals arrived in Recife from Maranhão. As early as April 1642, Gideon Morris championed the necessity of extending the Company’s control beyond Maranhão farther west towards Gran Para and the Amazon River. Morris, describing the situation, fertility, and profitability of Maranhão, explained that the region was “not as great as I had supposed in my writings.” The cause of the discrepancy, however, was not a personal oversight but rather the result of the Company failure to “fully execute the conquest as I had proposed.” Morris argued that a complete conquest required the seizure of Gran Para and the Amazon River because “these belong under one government” and “that one cannot exist without the other.” It would also have required the Company to seize all property and possessions from the Portuguese. Morris deemed Gran Para and the Amazon River “of more importance than Maranhão itself” for several reasons. First, the region contained more fertile soil better suited for the cultivation of sugar and tobacco. Second, the land was “richer in people because there is an uncountable number of Indians who can be used to cultivate the land.” Third, there was an abundance of trade to be had in slaves, manatees (*zeecoyen*), dyes, and cotton. And finally, a great possibility existed to discover gold

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<sup>90</sup> “Letter from Governor-General Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” August 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.270, fol. 9-10.

<sup>91</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 241.

<sup>92</sup> Boxer, *Dutch Brazil*, 145-146.

and silver mines.<sup>93</sup> The Council, faced with a growing supply shortage and unable to provision already existing outposts, presumably tabled Morris's request.

The Council did everything in their power to ensure a prosperous expansion in Brazil, but several extenuating factors placed the cause of the crisis out of their control. Operational and climatological factors were at work. The Company had planned to provision Company forces during its initial assault in Brazil, but they had never intended to provision them on a long-term, continuous basis. They hoped that the promised bounty of New Netherland would eventually produce enough to provide subsistence to both itself and possessions in the Caribbean and Brazil. These hopes never materialized due to New Netherland's own subsistence crisis and growing indigenous unrest.

Dutch Brazil, like New Netherland and the Dutch Republic, also failed to provide the colony with sufficient agricultural goods. C.R. Boxer attributes the cause of this failure to inconsistent immigration policies and the uncooperativeness of the skilled agricultural laborers who did come. Johan Maurits advocated on multiple occasions for the immigration of Dutch and German farmers to Dutch Brazil declaring it "the sole means of securing this conquest for us."<sup>94</sup> The *Heren XIX* agreed in October 1641 writing, "the welfare of the Company depended on peopling the land."<sup>95</sup> Motivating Dutch farmers to risk a trans-Atlantic journey, however, proved difficult if not impossible. The Dutch Republic, unlike other European nations that suffered during the attendant Little Ice Age, was in the midst of a Golden Age. And those who did not gain directly from the wealth of the age could rely upon a safety net offered by the church and emerging welfare-state. The farmers who did arrive in Dutch Brazil failed to live up to Johan

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<sup>93</sup> "Letter from Gideon Morris to Zeeland Chamber," April 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.154.

<sup>94</sup> "Letters of Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," quoted in Boxer, *Dutch Brazil*, 145.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

Maurits' expectations. They only temporarily took up plows in rural areas. Farming proved difficult and far from lucrative. Many instead exchanged their spade for a chance at trade in Recife which lured them in with promises of quick returns and long-lasting riches.<sup>96</sup>

The Company's failure to promote a bountiful agricultural community meant they had to purchase subsistence goods from Portuguese inhabitants throughout Brazil. With the scarcity and high price of grain, the Company's financial situation became even more strained. The Company's indebtedness reverberated throughout their enterprise and left those in charge of Brazil with a chronic lack of cash. The High Council required an infusion of gold and silver if they wanted to keep the conquests out of enemy hands. Monthly reports reveal that despite low cash balances, the Council was able to purchase goods and pay wages, though never completely and often sporadically.<sup>97</sup> As a result, debts rose, stock piles ran low, officers complained about lost wages, indigenous allies went unpaid, and unrest festered throughout.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to purchasing subsistence goods from the Portuguese, the Company increasingly relied upon their *Brasilianen* allies to sow, plow, and harvest subsistence goods. These provisions fed hungry soldiers, sailors, officers, slaves, and indigenous peoples themselves. Gideon Morris emerged as a leading proponent of employing *Brasilianen*. He wrote to the Council in August 1641 complaining about an attempt by Andries Edolffes to lure *Brasilianen* "using sweet words and great promises" away from Ceará in order to transport them to Rio Grande. Morris hoped to retain as many *Brasilianen* as possible in Ceará so that he could employ them in the making of salt and on plantations so that "we should not suffer a shortage

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<sup>96</sup> Boxer, *Dutch Brazil*, 145.

<sup>97</sup> For Dutch Brazil's end-of-month financial reports see: NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01 inv. nr. 69-70.

<sup>98</sup> "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," April 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.153, fol. 25; Nieuhof, *Gedenkwaardige Brasiliaense Zee- En Lant- Reize*, 44-45; Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 128.

due to lack of provisions.”<sup>99</sup> By the summer of 1643, the *Brasilianen* in Maranhão had been put to work producing provisions for the entire garrison there including themselves.<sup>100</sup>

Extreme weather events, in the form of disastrous and torrential rainfall in 1641 and 1642, proved the most detrimental factor in the direct provisioning of Dutch Brazil. All attempts to provision the colony from within, whether by encouraging Dutch farmers, purchasing provisions from Portuguese planters, or receiving assistance from indigenous allies, failed when extreme weather hit the colony between 1641 and 1642.

Northeastern Brazil typically experiences heavy rain between December and May with the heaviest rains coming in April and May. The dry season quickly follows ending with the driest months of the year in September and October. In 1641, the rainy season began as usual but by April had pushed rivers over their banks and flooded fields. Van Baerle described the impact in spectacular detail. “The movement of surging and receding waves pulled away what had been planted. The dams were either submerged or broken, leaving the cultivated fields flooded and no longer visible. As a result, ships sailed across them, and the landowners served as sailors. The death and destruction of people and animals were a great loss.”<sup>101</sup> May came and went without a stop in the rain. In June, Albert Smient wrote from Salinas and bemoaned the terrible conditions there. He contributed his distress to the “rainy season which persisted so extraordinarily long.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris to Governor-General and Council,” August 4, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 56.244.

<sup>100</sup> For example of employment of *Brasilianen* in subsistence agriculture in Maranhão, see: “Letter from Gideon Morris to Governor-General and Council,” June 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.289. For more on Dutch reliance upon indigenous peoples for subsistence goods see: Lodewijk Augustinus Henri Christiaan Hulsman, “Nederlands Amazonia: Handel Met Indianen Tussen 1580 En 1680” (PhD Diss, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2009), 134-136. Hendrik Brouwer, during his expedition to Chile in 1642-43, suggested exchanging weapons with the region’s indigenous peoples in return for food provisions, see: Benjamin Schmidt, “Exotic Allies: The Dutch-Chilean Encounter and the (Failed) Conquest of America,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1999): 466.

<sup>101</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 221, 247.

<sup>102</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris Concerning the Opportunities in Maranhão (Dated June 27, 1641),” August 23, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

He repeated his lament two months later stating that the first days of dry weather finally began on August 8, two months later than usual.<sup>103</sup>

Johan Maurits and the Council of Brazil, reflecting upon the previous year, relayed the concerns of Smient and others like him to the *Heren XIX* in February 1642. Poor weather, they wrote, caused the previous “unseasonable year” and had prevented the Council from rationing garrisons despite their continued dissemination of placards requiring the planting of farinha. “The first planting of farinha was destroyed,” they wrote, “by the great cold and long lasting dampness.” A second planting failed to mature due to “the persistent drought.”<sup>104</sup> Rain continued to plague fields and farmers. The continuous deluge prompted David Wiltshut, Commander in Rio St. Francisco, to assert that “here in six years such high water never has been.”<sup>105</sup> The overflowing river, he lamented, had pulled out the fields and rotted the remaining roots. Farinha, needless-to-say, would not be coming from Rio St. Francisco.

Hunger reached beyond just Company personnel and struck the *aldeias* and slave quarters throughout New Holland as well. Indigenous peoples, forced into *aldeias* and given little option but to work, were able to provide some subsistence goods to the Company during good harvests, but when extreme weather hit, they too became dependent on the generosity (or neglect) of the Company. Even when the *Brasilianen* plowed and harvested the fields themselves the rations they produced typically went directly into the Company’s magazines to be distributed amongst the entire population.

Indigenous reliance upon the Company for provisions began as early as 1641. Due to flooding in the *aldeia* of Mauritia, all the *Brasilianen*’s plantings rotted. The Council stepped in

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<sup>103</sup> “Letter from Albert Smijnt,” September 11, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>104</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123, fol. 11b-12.

<sup>105</sup> “Letter from David Wiltshut to Johan Maurits,” June 4, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.160.

to assist and agreed to send 12 bushels of farinha and 25 pounds of stockfish to the *aldeia* on a weekly basis for a period of three months.<sup>106</sup> Later in December the Council ordered the *schout* from Igracú to produce 200 bushels of farinha for the benefit of the *Brasilianen* who had been working in the salt mines near the River Upanemina.<sup>107</sup> The Company brought 200 Tapuya who appeared near Rio St. Francisco to an *aldeia* to prevent them from consuming the cattle herds roaming in the region as well as strengthen the *aldeia* population that had fallen due to hunger and smallpox.<sup>108</sup>

Consolidating the free *Brasilianen* population in *aldeias* became a common remedy proposed by the Council to counter the declining mission Indian population. Once placed in the enclosed mission, Company officials could force the *Brasilianen* to work for the Company. While this presumably increased the death toll amongst the indigenous population by exposing additional Indians to smallpox and other diseases, it also began to chew into the Company's diminished magazines. By June 1642, the Council began to send groups of Tapuya located in Recife to other *aldeias* in order to decrease the expenses associated with housing them, including the burden placed on the Company magazine, from which the Tapuya had been provisioned on a weekly basis.<sup>109</sup>

Continuously wrangling up and consolidating indigenous peoples in mission villages cut them off from their traditional subsistence and resilience strategies. Boxer writes that *Brasilianen* who lived in *aldeias* only planted "a few allotments of manioc and beans around their villages but were very negligent about cultivating them, chiefly relying on the products of the chase and

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<sup>106</sup> "*Brasilianen* Gardens in Mauritia Rotted," July 25, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>107</sup> "Farinha Sent for Service of *Brasilianen*," December 2, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>108</sup> "*Brasilianen* Brought to *Aldeia*," February 18, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Tapuyas Sent Provisions" June 2, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>109</sup> "Remonstrance Given to the Council by Listri," February 17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; "Remonstrance from *Brasilianen* Read by Listri," August 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

forest fruits for their sustenance.”<sup>110</sup> Efforts by the Company in February 1642 to shift the *Brasilianen*’s focus away from hunting and scavenging towards agriculture backfired when extreme weather events significantly decreased agricultural output and caused many mission Indians to die from a deadly combination of smallpox and malnourishment.<sup>111</sup>

In contrast to mission Indians, the Tapuya near Maranhão and Ceará who lived outside of the missions maintained their traditional subsistence practices that combined agriculture, hunting, and gathering. They subsisted on “fruits and edibles that they find in the wild, the animals they have hunted, fish, and wild honey.” Older women and women without children supplemented these provisions by making bread from scavenged roots which they call *attouh*, “while the younger women who cohabit with men bring ground nuts for all and prepare the food.” Men hunted, fished, and collected honey.<sup>112</sup>

Native priests played an important role in Tapuya agricultural rituals. Native priests consecrated fields before sowing or planting could begin. They blew tobacco smoke across them, which “filled the minds of the incredulous with dreams of fertility.” When harvest season approached, the king issued an edict for all the people and priests to join together. At this ceremony, priests decorated themselves in “brilliant colors and wear ornaments of specially chosen feathers, while the people put on wreaths of green leaves.” After consuming a vomit-inducing mixture of crushed, roasted tree nuts and water, the priests threw feathers into the sky. The abundance or scarcity of the harvest was then determined by how many feathers fell to the ground.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 134-134.

<sup>111</sup> “Remonstrance Given to the Council by Listri,” February 17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69

<sup>112</sup> Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 243

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-247

The Tapuya showed great respect to their priests in determining the outcome of expeditions, hunts, battles, and food gathering. The priests trekked into the woods and consulted with, “the devil or some similar creature,” before proclaiming the fate of any plan. The priests also engaged in a dialogue with birds using song to determine the future. Such beliefs, concluded Van Baerle, meant that the Tapuya, “would rather obey their soothsayers than their rulers.”<sup>114</sup>

The Tapuya appealed to these priests in 1641 when heavy rains flooded their fields and caused great damage to their harvests. Six priests turned to the Tapuya’s most sacred object – stones enclosed in a gourd which hung in the King’s tent – to understand and interpret the crisis. Despite the damaging rains, all six priests predicted fertile views of the future. The first declared that while the Dutch had been at war with the inhabitants of Bahia, they now sought reconciliation. The second, “showed a flower from the millet plant and predicted an abundant harvest.” The rest proclaimed an abundance of milk, flower, and honey, as well as bountiful hunts.<sup>115</sup>

The priests who relied upon the sacred stones might have predicted a bright future, but other Tapuya told stories suggesting that something in their spiritual world had gone awry. The Tapuya worshipped the Great Bear constellation as their “superior divinity,” singing and dancing when it emerged. A story told that the Tapuya once, “had a better and easier life, when food was always at hand without labor.” At some point, however, Fox arrived which caused them to turn away from Great Bear and hate him. As a result, Great Bear “denied their nation that favors of the great divinity” and “now their way of life is different and they must work to subsist because of the offense done the Great Bear and his subsequent anger.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 244

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 247

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 248



Fox might have been an allegory referring to European colonists who had arrived in the sixteenth century, converted indigenous peoples to Christianity, and caused them turn away from Great Bear. In addition to disrupting the spiritual practices of the Tapuya, European colonization along the coast most likely disturbed an important resilience strategy: migration. The Tapuya moved in connection to the rainy season. January rains which collected in mountain hollows, explained Baerle, “lead the Tapuyas to begin their summer wanderings and find a place to make camp.”<sup>117</sup> When this water dissipated, it appears that interior tribes like the Tapuya, migrated to the coasts where they could subsist off sea life. In 1644, due to a “lack of water” and ongoing warfare with neighboring groups, at least 120 Tapuya migrated to the Dutch-controlled regions of northeastern Brazil.<sup>118</sup>

Despite the shaman’s optimistic readings, 1642 proved deadly for the indigenous peoples of northeastern Brazil. Extreme weather arrived alongside deadly diseases and together led to a “great death” amongst “negros and *Brasilianen*.” Van Bullestrate blamed the deaths on the “great rains which fell during the rainy season along with the cold and drought which followed.” Together, cold and drought caused the fields and manioc crops to “mostly perish.”<sup>119</sup> A similar fate befell the “negros and *Brasilianen*” in Pernambuco who suffered great losses due to heavy rains, followed by a drought, and an outbreak of smallpox.<sup>120</sup> In Maranhão, where Commander J.J. Bas reported “great and continuous rain began very early this year,” the *Brasilianen* suffered terrible losses. “The streets and paths are found full of dead bodies caused by the great hunger.”

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 249. There is additional evidence for coastal migrations in later years as well. B.J. Barickman notes that backlanders traditionally moved to the coasts during years of scarcity, see: Barickman, *Bahian Counterpoint*, 84.

<sup>118</sup> “Tapuyas arrive from the Sertão” November 16, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70; “Report Concerning the Arrival of Tapuyas from the Sertão” November 23, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70. The Tapuya were found in the woods approximately 5 miles north of the *Ingenio Masuneppe* located in Rio Grande.

<sup>119</sup> “Letter from A. van Bullestrate to Zeeland Chamber,” March 2, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.119, fol. 2.

<sup>120</sup> “Letter from Pernambuco,” March 3, 1642, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5756, fol. 2.

Shortly, Bas continued, the *Brasilianen* would not be able to return to their *aldeias* because they will all “perish from hunger.”<sup>121</sup> The Company supported the mission Indians at least for a while with a small outlay of farinha, but reduced food rations, a lack of medication, and close quarters exacerbated an outbreak of smallpox that had been spreading throughout northeastern Brazil for several months.

The smallpox virus arrived aboard a ship traveling from Guinea to Recife on February 6, 1642. The boat carried 361 slaves, but 60 died en route.<sup>122</sup> It did not take long for the virus to spread. By February 28, reports arrived that slaves and *Brasilianen* in Pernambuco, Paraiba, and Itamaraca had been infected. Mission Indians were especially hard hit with some reports indicating that some *aldeias* suffered a total, 100% loss of life.<sup>123</sup> The *Amsterveen* reported similar conditions in Comestij, located 70 miles west of Ceará. The ship had hoped to load a shipment of Brazilianwood, but could not find any males to help because “all the Indians there were dead or lay under the smallpox illness.” Consequently they had to divert their course to Upanema to load salt.<sup>124</sup>

When the virus arrived in Maranhão it decimated the indigenous population. By April 1642, Gideon Morris reported that nearly 1,000 people in Maranhão, “both slave and free,” had succumbed to smallpox and “still daily pitifully die.”<sup>125</sup> J.J. Bas, accounting for the death of nearly two-thirds of the *Brasilianen* since the Company’s arrival, attributed the outbreak to the “*Brasilianen* which were brought with us from Ceará and Comestij for the completion of this successful expedition.” “This plague,” he continued, had killed so many slaves that, “the reed

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<sup>121</sup> “Letter from J.J. Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 8, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.85.

<sup>122</sup> “Letter from Heijndrick van Der Burcht aboard the *Nassau* to Zeeland Chamber,” March 3, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.107.

<sup>123</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits to Heren XIX,” February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123.

<sup>124</sup> “Report of the Arrival of the *Amsterveen* from Maranhao,” February 6, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>125</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris to Zeeland Chamber,” April 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.154.

fields and farinha plantings can not be worked.”<sup>126</sup> By July, if the censuses completed by Dutch commanders were accurate, the *Brasilianen* population had been drastically reduced to 600 men and women from 1,823 (1,088 males; 257 females; 478 children) in April. Jan Maxwell declared that the land stood in a terrible state and continued to deteriorate. The loss of slaves meant that the already planted manioc would rot in the ground and might prevent the “free Indians from obtaining any farinha the following year.”<sup>127</sup>

The *Brasilianen*, fearful of smallpox, kept away from the *aldeias* for as long as they possibly could. This created a problem for Dutch officials, though, who relied on a large, healthy, and skilled population of mission Indians. The “great and continuous sickness of pox,” the hesitancy of young *Brasilianen* men to return to pox-ridden areas, and the death of some of the strongest young men in recent skirmishes which left remaining but, “a few young [men], several old men, and many sad widows and orphans,” worried Dutch leaders.<sup>128</sup> They resolved to move as many *Brasilianen* back into the *aldeias* as possible.

A decrease in the supply and efficiency of laborers due to smallpox and other diseases resulted in yet additional abuses to the indigenous population. Constant rain had an immediate impact on the ability of the Company to wrest profits from Brazil. C.R. Boxer put it bluntly. Before 1641, “a succession of bad harvests, floods, and droughts, and other natural calamities, apart from guerrilla activities,” hurt the sugar trade.<sup>129</sup> Mill owners in Paraíba pointed directly to extreme rain and smallpox outbreaks (along with damages done by the soldiers of Castile who burned their fields two years prior) in a list of difficulties that had caused them to suffer

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<sup>126</sup> “Letter from J.J. Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 8, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.85.

<sup>127</sup> “Letter from Jan Maxwell to Johan Maurits and Council,” July 18, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.17. See also: Muewese, *Brothers in Arms*, 167-168.

<sup>128</sup> “Remonstrance Given to the Council by Listri,” February 17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>129</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 104, 141, 144.

“significant damage” since 1639 and prevented them from paying creditors in full. “The high waters and high rivers of Paraíba” led to such considerable damage to the sugar reeds that “only half as much sugar was made as [they] had hoped.” Smallpox killed at least one-thousand slaves and prevented those infected from working for three months.<sup>130</sup>

Other planters complained that the cause of the “desolate state and limited fruits” was due in part to the “passing long and hard winter, which due to all too much water placed the reed fields under water and severe cold which kept the reeds from producing crops that could be milled.” These planters described yet another natural disaster, this time in the form of a worm carried by the high waters, that wreaked havoc on the sugar fields in 1641. The pest, presumably a species of sugar cane borer (*biesges*), consumed the reeds from the inside and afflicted so many fields that “no good reed field is found.”<sup>131</sup> The collective impact of extreme rain, smallpox, and the worm epidemic devastated Brazil’s 1641 sugar production. Losses varied widely. Van Bullestrate claimed that the heavy rain, extreme cold, and worm epidemic cut the harvest in half.<sup>132</sup> The lack of sugar reeds, according to another source, caused many mills to halt production completely in October and November 1641.<sup>133</sup> The following year offered little relief. In March 1642, Johan Maurits reported that due to the “heavy rain and subsequent drought, little sugar” would be available to send back to *patria*.<sup>134</sup> The same heavy rains fell on Maranhão. “The great and continuous rains, which this year have started very early, has prevented any sugar

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<sup>130</sup> “Request from *Senhores van de Ingenhos* and *Lavradores* in Paraíba to Johan Maurits and Council,” n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.64.

<sup>131</sup> “Request from *Senhores van de Ingenhos* and *Lavradores* to Johan Maurits and Council,” February 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.138. See also: Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 221.

<sup>132</sup> “Letter from A. van Bullestrate to Zeeland Chamber,” March 2, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.119, fol. 3.

<sup>133</sup> “Request from Joao Fernandes Vieira to Johan Maurits and Council,” February 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.137.

<sup>134</sup> “Letter from Maurits in Pernambuco,” March 3, 1642, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5756, fol. 2.

from being dried in the *Ingenios*.”<sup>135</sup> Company sugar exports from Brazil fell drastically as a result. In 1641, the Company and private exports of sugar totaled 447,560 *arroba* (approximately 14.75 kilograms). In 1642, the total dropped to 298,914 *arroba*. The losses continued to mount year after year, never again recovering to their 1641 high.<sup>136</sup>

Salt mines, in contrast to sugar plantations which ran mostly on the backs of slaves, relied more heavily on indigenous workers. Rain made the tough work of preparing salt for export, a process that required dry conditions, even harder for the declining indigenous population. Gideon Morris raved about the potential profits to be made in the salt mines in northeastern Brazil in several letters to the Council, but the Company quickly learned that these promises appeared to have been exaggerated. This, however, was not necessarily the fault of Morris. The extreme rain that struck Brazil’s sugar cane also afflicted the salt mines.

Already in June 1641, five months before the Company captured Maranhão, Elbert Smient in Salinas reported that due to the “rainy season, which now so extraordinary long has held,” it was not possible to dry salt, but he hoped that the circumstances would change with the approaching dry season.<sup>137</sup> His hopes would only briefly be realized as the dry season was short lived. The following January, Jacob Abrahamsen wrote to the Council that “because all day here it severely lightnings and thunders, I do my best to dry all the salt.”<sup>138</sup> Again in 1642, the rains continued longer than usual. In July, Smient sent yet another letter to the Council suggesting that the rain had caused the salt to go bad.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> “Letter from J.J. Bas, to Johan Maurits and Council, April 8, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.85, fol. 1.

<sup>136</sup> Den Heijer, “The Dutch West India Company,” 50.

<sup>137</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris Concerning the Opportunities in Maranhão (Dated June 27, 1641,” August 23, 1641, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>138</sup> “Letter from Jacob Abrahamsen to Johan Maurits and Council,” January 18, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.146.

<sup>139</sup> “Letter from Elbert Gerritsen Smient to Johan Maurits and Council,” July 12, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.16.

The financial loss on the Company, which had invested time, men, and supplies into the repair, construction, and maintenance of Brazil's salt pans, must have been disappointing. The smallpox epidemic that had killed at least one thousand *Brasilianen* in northeastern Brazil also contributed to the salt pans underwhelming performance. "This sickness is also the cause that...no salt could be obtained in Upanema, because the *Brasilianen* who dry the salt...and bring it onboard the ships" had died due to the "terrible sickness."<sup>140</sup>

A general lack of African slaves throughout Dutch Brazil due to the smallpox epidemic challenged the resolve of several Dutch commanders in Brazil to grant indigenous peoples' freedom and keep the Company's promise with those who had already been granted freedom. Company officials in Maranhão responded to the Company's orders to grant freedom to the *Brasilianen* by stating that the *Brasilianen* were the only available labor source in Maranhão and that "by the liberation of these all the inhabitants on any day would be ruined." The already freed *Brasilianen* refused even to be loaned out for a day's work saying that, "they did not want to be forced to work." Their only concern was the "filling of their stomachs." The lack of slaves and the refusal of the *Brasilianen* to work, wrote Johan Maurits, meant that the "farinha plantings will remain way behind, and cause our garrisons to lack flour."<sup>141</sup>

Indigenous peoples' refusal to work infuriated Company officials who grew increasingly dependent upon them due to the African slaves' increased death rate. "Without the help of *Brazilianen* or negros," Johan Maurits warned, "nothing could be expected from there." A lack of slaves might also have influenced Gideon Morris to suggest that the Company make an

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<sup>140</sup> "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123. See also: Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 220.

<sup>141</sup> "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," September 29, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.32, fol. 31-33.

exception in Maranhão to their policy regarding the enslavement of indigenous peoples.<sup>142</sup>

Though Van Baerle interprets this move as a means to buy back enslaved indigenous allies so that they might be set free, another interpretation suggests a more sinister intention.<sup>143</sup> Guised as both “profitable for the Company and Christian,” Morris twisted the inter-tribal warfare that often ended in the death by cannibalism of those captured. Morris believed that the Company should save these people from the gruesome fate of cannibalism by enslaving them instead.<sup>144</sup>

Desperation amongst some Dutch leaders at decreased productivity and falling profits might have led them to push indigenous peoples into forced servitude – a move that further soured Dutch-indigenous relations. Dutch leaders were not entirely unaware of the deteriorating relationship between the Company and its indigenous allies. As Mark Meuwese explains, “the *Brasilianen* were...shocked by the many Indians who lost their lives during,” an expedition to Africa in 1641, and whom upon their return complained, “that the Dutch treated *Brasilianen* as expendable.”<sup>145</sup> To remedy the alliance, Johan Maurits organized a meeting of *aldeia* chiefs in March 1642 and gifted cloth, shirts, and linen to the approximately 42 leaders in attendance. This did enough to pacify the *aldeias* closest to Recife, but failed to appease the disgruntled indigenous leaders in the outposts further off.<sup>146</sup>

The promise of Maranhão, the most distant of the Company’s outposts, had greatly diminished during the Company’s first year there.<sup>147</sup> In April 1642, the dissipating situation

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<sup>142</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” February 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.123, fol. 30.

<sup>143</sup> Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 220.

<sup>144</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris to Zeeland Chamber,” April 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.154, fol. 3-4.

<sup>145</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 166. See also: Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 137.

<sup>146</sup> “Presentation of Gifts to the *Brasilianen*,” March 25, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69; “Complaints from *Brasilianen* Chiefs,” March 10, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>147</sup> “Letter from Gideon Morris to Zeeland Chamber,” April 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.154; “Letter from J.J. Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 8, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.85.

provoked Johan Maurits to inform the *Heren XIX* that, “due to the lack of laborers a large part of Maranhão is left uncultivated,” and without the assistance of the *Brasilianen*, “the new conquest will remain non-beneficial and fruitless for the Company.” He remained skeptical though that the “vindictive and cruel” indigenous nations who would “kill and destroy all the Portuguese” if allowed to, would not flee from the Company’s control.<sup>148</sup> Despite these apprehensions, the Council decided to take the gamble and sent provisions to Maranhão and was even willing to pay 600 guilders for the use of a private vessel due to a shortage of small, Company-owned vessels in Recife.<sup>149</sup> Various tools, several officers, and an unknown number of reinforcements to bolster the area’s defensive forces set sail for the outposts in May 1642. The decision to reinforce Maranhão came just in time for the Dutch stationed there.<sup>150</sup>

The first signs of notable resistance by indigenous groups against the Company in Maranhão began to emerge during the summer of 1642. Resistance initially came in the form of a string of complaints and remonstrances by Natives writing to Company leaders in Recife. Their complaints focused primarily on forced labor conditions and mishandling by Dutch leaders that prevented them from working in their fields to the detriment of their families. Dutch leaders also received news that the Tapuya living in Rio Grande, under the leadership of Jan de Wij, had committed robbery against the Dutch and launched several raids against the Company.<sup>151</sup>

Company leaders took several measures in responses to indigenous complains. First, they attempted to bring the Tapuya back under control. In June they hired Jacob Rabe to supervise the Tapuya. Rabe, a German, had spent several years amongst the Tapuya, learned their language,

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<sup>148</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” April 30, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.153, fol. 15.

<sup>149</sup> “Barque Sent to Maranhão with Predicant and Diverse Soldiers,” May 7, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>150</sup> “Troops Sent to Maranhão,” May 9, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>151</sup> “Order Against the Tapuya Robbing in the Rio Grande,” June 25, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69;



and earned their trust. Given his experience and trust, the Company ordered he act as an intermediary. He would live amongst the Tapuya and look after them in order to ensure a decrease in the raids led by Jan de Wij. The Company ordered the commanders at Casteel Ceúlen and Rio Grande to offer Rabe “a helping hand” if he needed it. The Company also offered a carrot with its stick. They decided to increase the wages of the Tapuya living in Rio Grande from four to five *varas* of *lynwaat* or linen. This, they believed, was more in line with the going rate for a month’s work throughout the rest of Dutch-controlled Brazil and would adequately compensate the Tapuya for their work. Finally, they attempted to stop Company commanders from mishandling and abusing indigenous laborers. The Council not only ordered commanders to allow the Tapuya sufficient time in their fields but also expressly prohibited commanders from forcing any *Brasilianen* – man, woman, married, single, son, or daughter – to work in service to the Company against their will.<sup>152</sup>

In August, yet more Native complaints arrived in the form of a remonstrance, this time from Itamarica. Johannes Listri, supervisor over the *Brasilianen* there, submitted the petition. Amongst his principal concerns was the need to remedy the “disorders amongst the Brazilianen which daily creep in.” He proposed two solutions to the problems. First, trusted Dutch leaders should be placed in command of each *aldeia* to watch over potentially rebellious natives. Second, any *Brasilianen* who lived outside of the *aldeias*, and thus susceptible to enslavement, should be moved into the missions. Listri argued that once in the missions, the Company could ensure the freedom of these indigenous peoples and bring them to a “more civil life.” Younger Natives who could be drawn in by the Portuguese drew special attention from Listri.<sup>153</sup> While

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<sup>152</sup> “Complaints by the Tapuya against the Company,” July 11, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 69.

<sup>153</sup> “Remonstrance from the Brazilianen submitted by Listri,” August 28, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

Listri masked his intentions with an air of benevolence, his thinly-veiled purposes were intended to prevent additional mishaps and stop a rebellion from forming.

Despite these efforts taken during the summer of 1642, the indigenous peoples of Brazil had reached a tipping point. They began to turn against their Dutch allies after being abused, mishandled, underpaid and even unpaid, dislocated from their families and traditional subsistence strategies, malnourished, and devastated by diseases. The first resistance began in Maranhão, but it soon spread to Ceará, then cascaded into a joint effort with the Portuguese in what is now known as the Planters' Revolt.

## 5. Indigenous Responses to Climate & Colonialism

In Maranhão, indigenous petitions and complaints against the Dutch West India Company boiled over into a violent assault by the *Brasilianen*. Historians have traditionally divided the subsequent indigenous resistance movement into two separate attacks. The first came during the winter of 1642 and the second in the spring of 1644. Both attacks originated with the arrival of Portuguese instigators and reinforcements who stirred up the local indigenous population. This explanation, however, fails to account for the *Brasilianen*'s motivations in agreeing to join forces with their former overseers. When seen from a climatological and indigenous perspective, the resistance movements of 1642 and 1644 might better be understood as a single, prolonged event. Extreme weather created a general subsistence crisis that not only exacerbated the impacts of labor abuses and smallpox, but also encouraged the Tapuya and *Brasilianen* – traditional enemies – to join forces with the Portuguese against Dutch control.

Sixteen Dutch soldiers became the first casualties of indigenous resistance in Maranhão on October 4, 1642. Jacob Stam, Jan Reijnieres, and Jurriaan Albertsz. – all former soldiers who had served in Maranhão – attested to these deaths when they returned to Amsterdam in 1644. The sixteen men had been sent to the mill of Anthonij Menies in early July for unspecified reasons and according to the soldier's testimony, all were killed by Natives the night before the full assault on São Luís began.<sup>154</sup> The next day, October 5, an allied force of *Brasilianen*, Tapuya, and Portuguese advanced towards the Company fort. They struck the small Dutch outpost of Fort Monte Calvário near Tapicuru and "betrayed, killed, and murdered" the soldiers stationed near the mills there. The deadly attacks by formerly-friendly Natives took the Company by surprise.

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<sup>154</sup> "Testimony of Jacob Stam, Jan Reijnieres, and Jurriaan Albertsz.," September 30, 1644, 5075.1290, 164v, Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

“This seems to us unbelievable, because of the oath of loyalty they took to us and the publication of the peace agreement.”

Any doubts Company commanders might have had to the validity of the assault faded the next day when three *Brasilianen* from the *aldeias* confirmed the attacks. The *Brasilianen* informed Dutch commanders that a Portuguese person had arrived in the *aldeia* in Maripirao and attempted “to stir up the Indians there and incite them to commit further treachery.” Many Natives, they said, had been convinced by the Portuguese and joined their efforts. Company commanders, after hearing the news, ordered Commander Doorschot to the *aldeia* of Maripirao with orders to arrest the Portuguese solicitors. When Doorschot arrived, however, he found the *aldeia* almost completely abandoned. He and his force encountered but a single mulatto, a Jesuit servant, who fled upon seeing the Dutch. Company forces caught him after a quick pursuit and interrogated him the next morning. The captured mulatto revealed that the entire treasonous plot had been planned by Anthony Monis (Antonio Muniz Barreiros) and several Jesuit leaders. The Company then executed the mulatto and placed his head on a stake as a sign to others.<sup>155</sup>

Company leaders quickly went to work to assess damages and halt the enemy’s advances. While they worked to uncover the reason for the assault, they also dispatched Heer Bas, Captain Sandelanen, Commander Macxvelt, and fourteen soldiers down river to assess the situation at Fort Mont Calvário in Tapicuru. The expedition’s two ships, however, ran aground short of the fort. While Company troops waited for the tide to lift them a Lieutenant Bartholomeus van Alphen made contact and informed them that the Portuguese and Native force aimed to march on

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<sup>155</sup> “Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas, Godefroy Doorschot, Cornelis Ruijs Brant Berensen and Willem Negentoon to Johan Maurits and Council,” October 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.42.

the city of São Luís. The relief party now feared that São Luís would be conquered and decided to turn around to inform and defend the city.<sup>156</sup>

The news of an imminent attack on São Luís prompted Company leaders to solidify their positions. Captain Negentoon ordered all the inhabitants of the city into the fort and gave express orders for them to gather any farinha they could obtain along the way. By evening, his orders had been completed. All inhabitants had arrived carrying a “good quantity of farinha.” Outside the fort’s walls, six Dutch soldiers and an equal number of still-loyal *Brasilianen*, all under the command of Sergeant Adriaene Crijnen, patrolled the surrounding fields.<sup>157</sup>

Company patrols spotted the Native and Portuguese forces near the “Old Coral” advancing towards the fort on the morning of October 8. In the fort, commander leaders prepared for a drawn-out fight. Captain Negentoon ordered that additional farinha from throughout the city be obtained to feed the barricaded citizenry. In the meantime, Lieutenant Cocq and forty soldiers attempted to spy on the enemy’s position and tried to capture one Portuguese or Native for information, but ultimately failed. The Portuguese along with “an uncountable multitude of *Brasilianen*” lay in ambush near the Coral. Cocq ordered a retreat after a brief skirmish that left two Company soldiers dead and several wounded.<sup>158</sup>

The Company tried yet another unsuccessful attack on October 10. The *Fiscaal*, supervised by Commander Macxvelt and under the protection of Captain Sandelanen, departed for Tapicuru with orders to apprehend Antony Monis and “inflict some damages” upon the enemy. Within a few hours, several wounded troops hobbled back to São Luís and reported that Captain Sandelanen and his troops had been defeated and most lay dead in the field. On the morning of

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

Sunday, October 12, the enemy attempted a direct attack upon the Company, perhaps hoping to find the troops worshipping at church. The Company forces, however, were armed and pushed back the attack without injury to themselves.<sup>159</sup>

Company commanders soon realized the fruitlessness of additional attacks and turned to diplomacy to bring an end to the assault. They sent a youth to hang their protests in a public place where a Portuguese soldier might find it. A few days later, however, the youth returned with a counter-protest and a letter from Antony Monis proclaiming that the Portuguese would not cease their attacks.

Just eleven days after the opening salvo, the Company forces in Maranhão were running low on supplies. The salt, farinha, fish, wine, and slaughtered livestock that had been secured by various means throughout the early days of the attack had been exhausted. And the enemy had cut off all passages out of the city – a tactic that both prevented the Company from obtaining any additional provisions and prevented reinforcements from arriving.<sup>160</sup> “Considering we lack everything,” wrote the Company’s commanders, “the general officers and soldiers show extreme courage and affection to defend this place to the last man in service to the Company.” They continued, however, by demanding more men, ammunition, and food if the Company hoped to keep the fort from these “tyrannical traitors and wild murderers.” The soldiers and wounded were quickly exhausting the little lead, flour, and medicine they had. They reported a dire situation. Brackish water was all that remained to drink and their forces had been reduced to 400, though they estimated 2,000 were needed to hold the fort.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> “Letter from Pieter Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” December 12, 1642 NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.226.

<sup>161</sup> “Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas, Godefroy Doorschot, Cornelis Ruijs Brant Berensen and Willem Negentoon to Johan Maurits and Council,” October 21, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.42.

The besieged force received a brief glimmer of hope in early December when James Henderson and approximately 150 soldiers arrived in Maranhão's bay. The fleet had departed Pernambuco on November 20, about three weeks before news of the attack on Maranhão actually reached the High Council. Henderson's force, however, appeared inadequate to take on the Native-Portuguese alliance which now numbered close to 200 Portuguese and 700 to 800 *Brasiliannen* and African slaves.<sup>162</sup> Making matters worse, the new forces arrived under-provisioned and the enemy's blockades continued to prevent anyone from foraging the surrounding countryside.<sup>163</sup>

News of Maranhão's attack and requests for reinforcements and provisions did not reach Recife until December 11.<sup>164</sup> Fulfilling the provisioning requests, however, required sacrifices on the part of the High Council. The previous months had been meager times. In October, Johan Maurits and the High Council had written to the *Heren XIX* that the entire colony was in a "sober state due to a lack of provisions." "In short," they pleaded, "not one single pound of flour can be found in the magazines to speak of, nor can a vat more be found to purchase from private planters." They placed the cause of the "extreme dilapidation" on the "untimely season and death of the negroes."<sup>165</sup> The situation had failed to improve a month later when an inventory of Recife, including men, weapons, and parts, found the Company in need of more food.<sup>166</sup>

The Council had to act if they hoped to maintain control of Maranhão. They feared their inability to act would result in the loss of not only Maranhão but perhaps all of Brazil. By their

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<sup>162</sup> "Journal by James Henderson (?) kept during Voyage to Maranhão," November 20, 1642 - December 6, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.59.

<sup>163</sup> "Letter from Abraham Jacobsen Wis (?) to Zeeland Chamber," December 12, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.271.

<sup>164</sup> "Letter (Dated October 22, 1642) Arrives Concerning Siege on Fort Monte Calvario in St. Luis," December 11, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>165</sup> "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," October 25, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.52.

<sup>166</sup> "Notes of the Secret Council of Brazil," November 25, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 76.

own admission and what appeared to be ominous foresight, they worried that a failure to quell the revolt would incite nearby captaincies to revolt as well.<sup>167</sup> On December 12, a day after hearing news of the attacks, the Secret Council ordered 300 soldiers to Maranhão. The ships carrying them would stop en route in Ceará to pick up additional *Brasilianen* to assist in the counter-attack. The Secret Council also ordered enough provisions for 600 people including hard bread, meat, dried cod, and flour for four months.<sup>168</sup> The deputy of provisions traveled to Maranhão to oversee the distribution of the scarce supplies.<sup>169</sup>

The High Council quickly tried to cobble together the necessary goods and people. They purchased flour from a ship that had recently arrived from the Dutch Republic and conscripted several men to help man the fort.<sup>170</sup> The Council also signed a contract with Skipper Gasper Gauwemeel for the use of his flute (*fluijt* or *fluyt* – a dedicated cargo ship) to ship the men and supplies.<sup>171</sup> Everything finally came together on December 27 and the Company assigned Lieutenant-Colonel James Henderson and Captain David Wiltschut to oversee the relief effort.<sup>172</sup>

The Council instructed Henderson to secure additional indigenous support on his way to Maranhão. First, Henderson was to stop in Ceará to pick up Gideon Morris and 200 *Brasilianen* auxiliaries. In order to hasten an end to the attacks, the Council granted Henderson and Morris the power to offer the *Brasilianen* a general pardon for all past transgressions and a promise of freedom to the *Brasilianen* and their offspring. The Council also hoped Henderson and Morris could uncover the cause of the *Brasilianen*'s discontent so that “in the future it can be remedied.”

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<sup>167</sup> “Deliberations Following News of Attack in Maranhão” December 25, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 76.

<sup>168</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” December 12-13, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69

<sup>169</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” December 16-17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69

<sup>170</sup> For farinha, see: “Notes of the High Council,” December 16-17, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69. For conscriptions, see: “Notes of the High Council,” December 19, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>171</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” December 14, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69

<sup>172</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” December 27, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69



The Council recognized, though, that the cause appeared to be the Company's "unseemly" or "improper" employment of the Natives. As for the Portuguese, Henderson was to assess the situation in Monte Calvário, use all the power of his force to eradicate the Portuguese, and return Maranhão to its previous state of obedience.<sup>173</sup>

The arrival of Henderson and his troops, estimated at 400 Company soldiers and 150 *Brasilianen* from Ceará, on January 15 temporarily turned the tide of war in the Company's favor. Henderson's troops immediately organized a counter-attack that dislodged the surrounding Native-Portuguese forces near São Luís. Though, the Native-Portuguese force then fortified themselves at a nearby plantation. The Company force pursued but was repelled and suffered several dead and 60 to 70 wounded. A week later, the Company sent a patrol of 12 Company soldiers and 10 Ceará *Brasilianen* to investigate the enemy's strength. The force found the plantation abandoned. Captain Jacob Enous led a follow-up expedition of 100 to 150 *Brasilianen* that discovered the enemy position on the banks of the river high on a hill. Enous, however, retreated after realizing the enemy's numerical superiority and geographic advantage. The mission was not a complete failure. Enous managed to capture a *Brasilianen* who informed him that the Portuguese were expecting reinforcements.<sup>174</sup> Additional *Brasilianen* and Tapuya from Gran Pará were heading to Maranhão and were expected to join the forces already entrenched at Fort Monte Calvário in Tapicuru.<sup>175</sup> When the Portuguese reinforcements did arrive, Company commanders estimated the total Native-Portuguese force rose to 700 Portuguese and 3,000

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<sup>173</sup> "Instructions from Johan Maurits and Council for James Henderson," December 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.58.

<sup>174</sup> "Journal by James Henderson (?) kept during Voyage to Maranhão," November 20, 1642 - December 6, 1642, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 57.59. For more on the attacks led by Morris and Wiltshut, see: Gedion Morris, "Letter from Gideon Morris to Johan Maurits and Council," January 18, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.272. See also: Van Baerle, *History of Brazil*, 234-235.

<sup>175</sup> "Letter (Date February 2, 1643) from James Henderson to Antonij Carsciere de Melo and Copy of Resolution (Dated February 18, 1643)," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.283.

Brasilianen.<sup>176</sup> In contrast, the Company had 536 soldiers and 235 *Brasilianen*.<sup>177</sup> The smaller Company force might have been able to maintain the island of São Luís, but it was clear if the Company wanted to quell the Native-Portuguese revolt, dislodge them from Fort Monte Calvário, and restore Dutch order, they would need to rally additional men and supplies.

Speculations abounded regarding the cause of the *Brasilianen*'s alleged betrayal as the conflict wore on. The Company's main focus, however, never wavered from returning their former Native allies back "to our devotion." James Henderson placed the cause of "all the evil" squarely on the shoulders of the "devilishly lustful" Portuguese who forced the *Brasilianen* to work for them. Henderson went on to suggest that without being properly "enlightened" by the Dutch, the *Brasilianen* would sink into a state of slavery.<sup>178</sup> Other Dutch commanders, hopeful of restoring the *Brasilianen* alliance, exclaimed the Company's innocence and placed the blame solely on a few bad apples.<sup>179</sup> But as much as the Company needed the *Brasilianen*'s allegiance, they had little to offer them in return.

The revolt settled into a stalemate as the rainy season set in at the end of January 1643. Company commanders worried that the heavy rains would jeopardize their already precarious hold in Maranhão. Heavy rains pounded holes into the red, earthen walls of Fort São Luís. The repairs required the daily labor of an already spent force who had "little to eat."<sup>180</sup> Heavy rains and thunderstorms continued into April making it difficult to acquire food or to "get any work

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<sup>176</sup> "Letter from J. Sighevriet to Johan Maurits and Council," January 30, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.278.

<sup>177</sup> "Letter from James Henderson to Johan Maurits and Council," January 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.279.

<sup>178</sup> "Letter from James Henderson to Johan Maurits and Council. 1643 Januari 29," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.275.

<sup>179</sup> "Letter (Date February 2, 1643) from James Henderson to Antonij Carsciere de Melo and Copy of Resolution (Dated February 18, 1643)," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.283; "Letter from Balthasar van Der Voorde to Zeeland Chamber," April 1, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.324.

<sup>180</sup> "Letter from James Henderson to Johan Maurits and Council," January 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.279.

done.” The situation deteriorated more each day as the fort fell into disrepair, the Company’s magazines ran dry, and the nerves of soldiers and inhabitants in Maranhão wore thin.<sup>181</sup>

Dutch leaders in Maranhão could no longer rely upon their former *Brasilianen* allies for resources and looked for alternative means to acquire much needed food provisions. The Company “daily exert[ed] great diligence to harvest manioc from the land in order to make farinha,” but heavy rains and thunderstorms made finding harvestable manioc difficult.<sup>182</sup> In addition to damaging the crops and rotting its roots, on at least one occasion thunderstorms foiled Company efforts to gather the little edible manioc they found nearby. Several patrols had been ordered to look for food and on one occasion the soldiers stumbled across a field of manioc about a mile from the fort. During their attempt to load the roots, however, a thunderstorm broke the lines of the smaller flatboat that they used to haul the roots from the shallow beach back to their ship. The boat drifted out of reach, the manioc it carried fell overboard, and once the ship was recovered it was deemed irreparable.<sup>183</sup>

Maranhão leaders who could not adequately meet the garrison’s needs by foraging nearby fields instead petitioned, pleaded, and begged Johan Maurits and the High Council for assistance.<sup>184</sup> Pieter Bas and James Henderson feared Maranhão’s “great scarcity in everything.”<sup>185</sup> Maranhão, they cried, “can not tolerate any delay.”<sup>186</sup> If the fort was not properly

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<sup>181</sup> For nerves, see: “Letter from David Wiltshut to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 12, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.285; For depletion of magazine, see: “Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 10, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.286.

<sup>182</sup> “Letter from David Wiltshut to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 12, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.285.

<sup>183</sup> “Letter from E. de Bonte to Adriaen van Bullestrate,” April 10, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.284.

<sup>184</sup> “Letter from J. Sigchvriet to Johan Maurits and Council,” January 30, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.278; “Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” April 10, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.286.

<sup>185</sup> “Journal (Dated December 18-25, 1642) of Pieter Jansen Bas,” January 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.276.

<sup>186</sup> “Letter (Date February 2, 1643) from James Henderson to Antonij Carsciere de Melo and Copy of Resolution (Dated February 18, 1643),” n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.283.

maintained, “the enemy, God forbid, will notice our poor state” and launch an assault.<sup>187</sup> Their messages were clear. If the Council failed to send provisions, Maranhão would be completely lost. Yet, their request for assistance went unanswered. And so, Maranhão’s leaders tried one final tactic. They sent James Henderson back to Recife to report on Maranhão’s terrible condition and request immediate assistance.<sup>188</sup>

The High Council could do little to help the beleaguered troops in Maranhão. The situation in Recife had not improved since December and the Company’s main magazines continued to be depleted. In January, the Council thanked the *Heren XIX* in Amsterdam for their assistance in mustering additional supplies and men but lamented that the *Heren XIX*’s projections were below the levels the Council of Brazil had requested. Brazil’s High Council additionally bemoaned the lack of money to support trade and commerce in Brazil. They knew a lack of money would lead to a complete halt in trade and the loss of the colony, but it also seemed that money could do little to alleviate the colony’s supply problems.<sup>189</sup>

While heavy rains afflicted the besieged Company soldiers in Maranhão, excessively dry conditions prevailed further south and in the *Sertão*. Early in April 1643, Johan Maurits reported that “our greatest difficulty lies in the scarcity of provisions.” He believed locally grown “flour would reduce the burden, but by means of the excessive drought this year and as a result of the infertility none can be purchased.”<sup>190</sup> He expected little help from the *Heren XIX*, though.<sup>191</sup> As a

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<sup>187</sup> “Letter from James Henderson to Johan Maurits and Council,” January 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.279.

<sup>188</sup> “Letter (Date February 2, 1643) from James Henderson to Antonij Carsciere de Melo and Copy of Resolution (Dated February 18, 1643),” n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.283. The choice of Henderson to petition on Maranhão’s behalf is odd. He frequently argued that Maranhão was a waste of the Company’s time and money and fervently believed the place was beyond repair, for example, see: “Letter from James Henderson to Johan Maurits and Council,” January 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.279.

<sup>189</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council,” January 9, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.

<sup>190</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits,” April 3, 1643, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5757 D.517-D.522.

<sup>191</sup> “Letter from *Schout* and Magistrates to Heren XIX,” April 3, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.313.

result of failed harvests and a lack of money, the Company “fell into greater scarcity of provisions from day to day,” and complaints from throughout Brazil poured into Recife demanding help.<sup>192</sup>

The Council had moved to send some provisions and medication to Maranhão in April, but never acted on their resolution. James Henderson’s arrival in Recife in May provided the necessary pressure to convince the Council of Brazil to spare additional provisions.<sup>193</sup> Henderson pleaded with the Council to send help if they wished to maintain control over the region.<sup>194</sup> After much deliberation, including whether to send provisions to other places that had reported shortages including Guyana, Itamarica, and Paraíba, the Council agreed to assist Henderson and Maranhão.<sup>195</sup> Doing so came at a great cost to the Company. In June, one Adriaen Lems described the settlement’s magazine as completely destitute and the land fruitless.<sup>196</sup>

The course of the conflict in Maranhão took an unexpected turn in May 1643. Provisions sent by the Company allowed Maranhão’s defenders to secure the island of São Luís and hold off potential Native-Portuguese attacks. The Company, however, could not afford to mount a full assault to eradicate the surrounding Native-Portuguese forces. The Company’s luck improved in late May when a joint expedition of 80 Ceará *Brasilianen* and 100 Company forces found that the Native-Portuguese forces had abandoned Fort Monte Calvário. Company forces quickly reoccupied Fort Monte Calvário, although the Native-Portuguese force did destroy the surrounding sugar mills upon their retreat, rendering them useless to the Dutch.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” March 2, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 69.

<sup>193</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” April 11, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

<sup>194</sup> “Report from Henderson and Vande Poelen Concerning the Situation in Maranhão,” May 15, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

<sup>195</sup> “Notes of the High Council,” May 18, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

<sup>196</sup> “Letter from Adriaen Lems to Zeeland Chamber,” June 13, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.123.

<sup>197</sup> “Letter from Pieter Jansen Bas to Johan Maurits and Council,” June 20, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.288

The Native-Portuguese force had not been defeated. Instead, they had taken up new defenses along the Tapitapera River.<sup>198</sup> From this new position they attacked a group of Company forces returning to São Luís. Aware that they were outnumbered and overpowered, the Company troops raised a white flag and entered into negotiations. The enemy force raised several points of complaint during the negotiations. Principally, the *Brasilianen* argued the Dutch had abused them, treated them as slaves, and had unlawfully taken Maranhão. The Company troops had no diplomatic powers, however, and the negotiations had to continue via an exchange of diplomatic letters between Company leaders in São Luís and the enemy commander. A majority of the Company's leaders agreed that the *Brasilianen*'s accusations did not merit a response. Morris and several others disagreed. Unanswered allegations, Morris asserted, could be construed as a sign of guilt. Morris even hinted that there might be a bit of truth in the enemy's allegations and suggested the Council request the *Brasilianen* to hand over the names, places, and times of the abuses so that the Company could punish those responsible and bring an end to the unrest. In the end, the Council ignored Morris's suggestions and the enemy's demands.<sup>199</sup>

Upon hearing news of the restoration of Fort Monte Calvário to Dutch control, the *Brasilianen* from Ceará, who had served in Maranhão since January 8, immediately requested to return home to their wives and children. They also demanded that they be paid for their service. Morris, who had overseen the Ceará *Brasilianen* during the hostilities, tried to acquire the necessary wages for payment of service but found nothing in Maranhão's magazine to pay them except desiccated cassava. Morris understood the necessity of paying the Ceará auxiliaries. He

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.; "Letter from Gideon Morris to Johan Maurits and Council," June 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.289.

<sup>199</sup> "Letter from Gideon Morris to Johan Maurits and Council," June 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.289. For a copy of the Portuguese truce and the Council's response, see: NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.64 and NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.65

requested the High Council send full payment so that he could ensure the *Brasilianen*'s continued devotion. He also hoped that by paying the *Brasilianen* he could win back the previously loyal *Brasilianen* who now fought alongside the Portuguese. In order to win back those he referred to as "strangers," he argued that the Company must demonstrate that they dealt honestly with people and paid those who served them. Until proper payment arrived, however, he was forced to feed the *Brasilianen* with promises and "good words."

The inability of the Company to pay or feed the *Brasilianen* caused a great deal of agitation amongst the Natives. The Ceará *Brasilianen* had been of great service to the Company both during the conflict and after. While waiting for permission to return to Ceará they had toiled in the manioc fields and succeed in producing 710 *alqueren* of farina above their own rations that went directly into the Company's magazines to feed its troops.<sup>200</sup> Yet, the Natives – to their great anguish – still went unpaid and underfed.

Company leaders might have been relieved upon hearing news of Fort Monte Calvário's recapture, but Gideon Morris believed the future of Maranhão was bleak. Morris reported that the Dutch did not have the people, provisions, or artillery to withstand additional assaults or revolts that might come from the Native-Portuguese forces still entrenched near the Tapitapera River. Already stretched Company forces had to be spread even thinner in order to maintain control over São Luís and now re-occupy Fort Monte Calvário. Additionally, the ongoing war prevented the sowing of farinha – a situation that would come at great expense if provisioning ships had to be sent on a continuous basis. Morris also worried that soon "sweet words" would have to replace bullets due to the shortage of firepower. If strength were not soon restored, either

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.; "Letter from Gideon Morris to Johan Maurits and Council," June 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.289.

through a longer campaign to seize Gran Pará to the west or through a peace agreement with the Portuguese, the Company stood to lose everything.<sup>201</sup>

Morris had a variety of reasons to fear an influx in Native resistance. The *Brasilianen* from Ceará who had been sent to the Maranhão in January to help the Company secure their position did so under the pretext of receiving due payment for their service, daily food rations, and the right to return home when hostilities ended. As July approached these promises remained unkept. The *Brasilianen* had not received their pay and the Company's supply stock was so low that Maranhão's leaders forced the *Brasilianen* to produce farina for themselves and the Dutch garrisons. The leaders also had not yet received permission from the High Council to allow the *Brasilianen* to return to their wives and children. Unpaid wages and involuntary indigenous labor, the same problems that led several *Brasilianen* to join forces with the Portuguese in 1642, now reappeared less than a year later.

Morris received more damning news regarding several *Brasilianen* who had been unlawfully sold into slavery. Commander Johannes Macxvelt had been sent to the Island of St. Joan with ten men and forty *Brasilianen* from Ceará and Maranhão in order to haul in some fish to help remedy Maranhão's supply issues. Now it appeared he intended to sell these "free *Brasilianen*" as slaves either on St. Christoffel (St. Kitts) or Barbados. How Morris heard this news is unclear, but he rightfully fretted that if the Natives' relatives heard the news it could cause further revolt. Morris implored Johan Maurits and his Council to send Macxvelt a letter demanding he return with the Natives.<sup>202</sup> When Macxvelt was finally located and returned to

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.



Recife to face trial for his unlawful seizure and sale of the *Brasilianen*, it would be too late.

Morris's fears of additional indigenous resistance had already come true.<sup>203</sup>

Continued extreme weather, a shortage of cash, and the tardiness of incoming supplies from the Dutch Republic put the Company's magazines in dire straits and the individuals who relied on those rations on edge. Company leaders continued to express their worries in several letters to the *Heren XIX*. The Company's magazines were destitute.<sup>204</sup> Harvest failures caused the cost of flour to skyrocket to exorbitant and excessive prices. And the Company, already short of cash, had no option but to pay these high prices leaving them with even less cash on hand. A lack of money also did great harm to the Company's trade position as they were unable to purchase goods and services.<sup>205</sup> Unruly soldiers, underfed and unpaid, led to even further difficulties.<sup>206</sup> The Company ordered the butchering of livestock to keep them fed, but this was an unsustainable option.<sup>207</sup> Company leaders in Recife tried to spread the available rations around based on a calculation of strategic necessity and fort vulnerability. Maranhão, while not ranking at the top of this list, received a share.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> For the eventual discovery of Macxvelt by Gilles Tenant with the help of English and French governors and his subsequent trial, see: Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Governor of Curaçao, January 26, 1644; "Letter from Gilles Venant and Jehan Jobsz. to Zeeland Chamber," March 10, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.149; "Letter from the High Council to Heren XIX, February 13, 1645, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 60.10 fol. 23-24.

<sup>204</sup> For example, see: "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Zeeland Chamber," September 20, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.91.

<sup>205</sup> "Letter from Adriaen Lems to Zeeland Chamber," August 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.58; "Letter from Balthasar van de Voorde to Zeeland Chamber," August 31, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.66.

<sup>206</sup> "Report for Johan Maurits and Council Concerning Administration of Brazil," n.d., NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.114.

<sup>207</sup> "Letter from Baltasar van Der Voorde to Zeeland Chamber," September 23, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.99.

<sup>208</sup> "List of Goods Sent (June and July 1643) to Maranhão," 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.26; "Inventory of Rations to be Sent to Maranhão" June 1, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70; "Inventory of Rations Sent to Maranhão" October 26, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

The Council of Brazil's best efforts did little but keep Maranhão on its last legs. When Pieter Jansen Bas, commander of Maranhão, arrived in Recife in September 1644 to petition for additional assistance, he reported the magazine to be in a "sober state" and the inhabitants of the region "destitute."<sup>209</sup> And by the end of December 1643, despite a renewal of Maranhão's magazines, worries once again arose around the scarcity of provision. Eight weeks of flour, three weeks of meat, and one week of *potspijs* remained for the 456 people stationed on the island. J. Wiltshut declared the scarcity "sad." Along with provisions, Wiltshut requested the Council in Recife send some carpenters. "The rainy months are at hand," he fretted, and the already damaged fortification "will only get worse in the rainy months."<sup>210</sup>

Company efforts to cultivate farinha in and around Maranhão continued to fail for multiple reasons. "There exists few fields with good farinha," Michiel van Ochuijsen wrote to the Council in December 1643, "the reason being that they have been left unattended for too long and are soaked." He continued that "the other reason is that we do not dare to send people out or they while be captured or killed by the enemy." In Van Ochuijsen's assessment, Maranhão "must be supported in everything by [the Council] since nothing at all is being planted and the plantations are empty and overgrown with weeds."<sup>211</sup> If the Council truly wished to rid Maranhão of revolt, restore order, and resume profits from the region, they would need to send additional men and supplies.

Before the Council could act, however, the tensions that had ignited in Maranhão began to spread into the neighboring region of Ceará. The first attack reportedly occurred on New Year's

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<sup>209</sup> "Letter from Baltasar van Der Voorde to Zeeland Chamber," September 23, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.99.

<sup>210</sup> "Letter from J. Wiltshut to Johan Maurits and Council," October 18, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.291.

<sup>211</sup> "Letter from Michiel van Ochuijsen to Johan Maurits and Council," December 4, 1643, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.292.

Eve when a group of Tapuya near Ceará shot and killed three Company soldiers.<sup>212</sup> The full extent of the situation in Ceará would not become clear until March 1644. That month the *Hasewint* and *Drack* returned to Recife after a supply run to Maranhão.<sup>213</sup> They reported that Maranhão remained in a sorry state. The *Brasilianen* and Portuguese continued to block passageways to and from fields and as a result, the garrison's provisions continued to run dry. Since Maranhão's garrisons were unable to "gain profit from the land" Company employees would have to be "fed out of hand" for the foreseeable future. The Council of Brazil took the report seriously and ordered the immediate provisioning of the *Hasewint* with 40 barrels of sundry food items which set sail for the Maranhão on March 22 along with a letter of assurance that the *Melckmeyt* would be sent as soon as possible with six months provisions for 450 people.<sup>214</sup>

The two yachts also carried news of the indigenous strife in Ceará. The *Hasewint* and *Drack* had intended to bring refreshments and water to Ceará on their return journey from Maranhão but when they landed they found the garrison "to be completely different than what they expected." The *Hasewint*'s skipper, one office, and two soldiers, went ashore approximately three miles north of Ceará but were met by a group of *Brasilianen* who attacked and murdered them. The skipper of the *Drack*, unaware of this earlier event, landed further down shore along with three officers and eight soldiers, intending to reach Ceará by foot. They too met a group of *Brasilianen* who overwhelmed them and beat most of them to death, except for three soldiers who escaped by swimming back to the ship. During the attack, an additional group of

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<sup>212</sup> "Letter from Johan van Rasenberg to Zeeland Chamber," January 11, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 58.193.

<sup>213</sup> "Notes of High Council," February 29, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

<sup>214</sup> "Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX," April 5, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.143; "Inventory of Rations Sent to Maranhão on the *Hasewint*," March 14, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 70.

*Brasilianen* boarded the *Drack* under the false pretense of exchanging some refreshments and parrots with the crew. In actuality they attempted to seize the yacht. Two *Brasilianen* and four sailors died before the Dutch were able to drive them off the boat. The three surviving soldiers later recounted the details, speculated that several barks along with the fort in Ceará must have been seized by the *Brasilianen*, and believed the Dutch inhabitants, including Gideon Morris, had been killed. The soldiers concluded that the Council could “not rely on the *Brasilianen* much, because in general they have no other goal or ambition but to remain in freedom and not in service, because they want to lead a lazy and idle life, additionally to be left in the consumption of brandy without punishment.”<sup>215</sup>

Johan Maurits and the High Council did not understand from where the *Brasilianen*’s enmity arose. Their immediate hunch led them to conclude that the *Brasilianen* in Ceará revolted as a result of a “misuse” of *Brasilianen* women, unpaid wages, and forced labor – all of which went against their orders.<sup>216</sup> In a later report they suggested that the success of the *Brasilianen* in Maranhão must have encouraged the Ceará *Brasilianen* to resist as well. In order to bring an end to hostilities they ordered David Wiltshut to make full payment in the form of *lijnwaet* (linen) to the *Brasilianen* of Ceará and allow any *Brasilianen* who requested to return to their friends “to do so without question, in order to see if by these means they can be brought into peace and unity [with our nation].”<sup>217</sup> But it would be too little too late. Ceará and its inhabitants would remain independent of Dutch rule until 1649 when Mathias Beck landed there and founded a new fort called Schonenburgh, although they did resume diplomatic relations in 1645.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” April 5, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.143

<sup>216</sup> “Documents Relating to the Dutch Possessions in Brazil,” 1644-1645, Royal Library Manuscript Collection, 76 A16 fol. 19-19b.

<sup>217</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” April 5, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.143

<sup>218</sup> Boxer, *Dutch in Brazil*, 220; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 169.

News of the spreading revolt prompted the Council yet again to further action. In early March 1644, despite the “scarcity of provisions in which we ourselves have found ourselves for some time, [and which] is the reason that we are unable...to assist the Maranhão as they should be,” they once again ordered additional rations sent to Maranhão. The rations, though, would not make it in time.<sup>219</sup>

In April 1644, after 18 months of attacks by a Native-Portuguese alliance, relentless rains that destroyed forts and fields alike, and countless requests for assistance, the Company’s position in Maranhão had reached a breaking point. The garrison’s magazines had run dry and São Luís’s Company commander, David Wiltshut, had no other option but to abandon the fort. The 450 Company servants remaining in Maranhão sailed to the island of Curaçao where Wiltshut had previously served. They arrived “without any food supply” over the course of several days at the beginning of April and reported that it was due to this lack of food “that they had to leave their places.” Peter Stuyvesant, the island’s director, worried that as a result of the fleeing soldiers’ dire condition he would have to “provide for them out of our stores, diminishing our food supply, as it will diminish daily more and more.”<sup>220</sup>

The abandonment of Maranhão in April 1644, instigated by an indigenous revolt that began in November 1642 after Portuguese incitement, marked a turning point of Dutch expansion in Brazil and beyond. It was here that the contraction of the Netherlands’ territorial control in the Atlantic world began. Johan Maurits’ ambitious plans came to an end and while plans had been laid to push on to Gran Pará they would never come to fruition. The revolt spread and ignited the Portuguese Planters’ Revolt – a massive effort by Native and Portuguese allies to eradicate the

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<sup>219</sup> “Letter from Johan Maurits and Council to Heren XIX,” April 5, 1644, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 59.143

<sup>220</sup> “Resolution,” May 18, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 37.

Company from Brazil entirely. The Dutch slowly lost hold of their Brazilian conquests over the next several years. In 1654, after a decade of attacks by Native and Portuguese forces and episodic extreme weather events, the Company left Brazil for good, but the loss of Maranhão in 1644 was the first domino to fall.

## 6. Aftermath

The Company tried on multiple occasions to restore indigenous relations in Brazil in the years between Maranhão's fall and the Company's final abandonment. Financial woes, supply concerns, and a reduction in troops following the 1642 treaty obligations with Portugal meant that the Dutch needed indigenous allies more than ever. To do so, the Dutch sent several indigenous intermediaries to Ceará to sure up relations. They did the same to solidify their relationship with *aldeia* leaders in Pernambuco, Itamaracá, Parnaíba, and Rio Grande.<sup>221</sup> In order to firmly establish these alliances and demonstrate their willingness to recognize indigenous peoples as equal partners, the *Heren XIX* formally granted specific rights and freedoms to the *Brasilianen* in November 1644 in a document that emphasized indigenous sovereignty in order to alleviate Native concerns.<sup>222</sup>

The Company's effort to restore diplomatic relations and solidify indigenous alliances came at a propitious time. In June 1645, disparate efforts to dislodge the Company throughout Brazil came together in Pernambuco when Portuguese planters (*moradores*) launched a full revolt against Dutch colonial occupation of Brazil. During the course of the Planters' Revolt, the Dutch called upon their Tapuya and *Brasilianen* allies on multiple occasion. The Company's indigenous allies proved fierce and faithful allies in the war. Though they suffered great losses, they remained loyal despite a vocal contingent of individuals who supported the Portuguese rebels over the Dutch.<sup>223</sup>

The willingness of the *Brasilianen* and other groups to remain loyal is striking given the earlier resistance movements staged in Maranhão and Ceará. The most logical explanation for

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<sup>221</sup> Meuwese, *Partners in Trade*, 169.

<sup>222</sup> Meuwese, *Partners in Trade*, 170. For the treaty, see: "Letter of Freedom for *Brasilianen*," November 24, 1644, NA, States General, 1.01.02, inv. nr. 5757: D.941-942.

<sup>223</sup> Meuwese, *Partners in Trade*, 175.

this turn of affairs suggests the willingness of the Company to recognize indigenous peoples' right to self-government – something the Portuguese were unwilling to do. Additionally, the Portuguese wounded future relations with several of Brazil's indigenous groups in August 1645. Portuguese officials, after attacking and capturing the Company-controlled fort of Serinhaem in Pernambuco, agreed to pardon the Company's soldiers, but chose to hang 33 *Brasilianen*.<sup>224</sup> The *Brasilianen* refused to forgive the Portuguese this grievance, but they also laid blame on the Company. The Company's unwillingness to protect the rights and lives of their allies severely damaged their relationship. In March 1648, António Paraupaba, the Company's indigenous magistrate (*regidores*) in Rio Grande, offered to intercede and restore relations in Ceará on behalf of the Company.<sup>225</sup> He requested the Company supply him with diplomatic gifts in order to enter into negotiations. The Company believed he wanted to keep the goods for himself, though, and refused to provide the trade goods the Paraupaba requested.<sup>226</sup> Though in future diplomatic efforts, trade goods, mainly in the form of linen that the *Brasilianen* used for clothing, were essential in maintaining indigenous alliances healthy throughout the war.<sup>227</sup>

Extreme weather events both at home and abroad continued to mark the Company's waning years in Brazil. In the Netherlands, after receiving news of the Portuguese revolt at the end of August 1645, severe frost left ports icebound during the winter of 1645-1646 and delayed ships from departing. Some ships were left stuck in the English Channel and others could not depart until May 1646.<sup>228</sup> The delay jeopardized the Company's position in Recife. Soldiers' rations were reduced to two ounces daily, food supplies reached famine levels, and malnutrition

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., 178-179.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 176, 188.

<sup>228</sup> Boxer, *Dutch Brazil*, 176.



and beriberi became an everyday reality. The arrival of two Dutch ships in June carrying provisions brought relief and optimistic news that additional ships were on the way. The ships came just in time. The Company was down to its last four barrels of flour.<sup>229</sup>

The last of the provisioning ships dispatched during the winter of 1645-1646 finally reached Recife in November. While the ships temporarily provided relief for the besieged Netherlanders, extreme weather in Brazil threatened the Company's defenses again as early as January 1647. James Henderson, stationed in Penedo located along the banks of the Rio de São Francisco in the Captaincy of Alagoas, requested additional troops to support his efforts. The enemy, he reported, was very strong in contrast to the Dutch who were "weak and faint due to the work and the unusualness of the water."<sup>230</sup>

Another period of extreme weather struck northern Brazil between 1650 and 1652. Severe weather on the Atlantic in 1650 delayed the arrival of several Dutch warships. The ships had been provisioned upon their departure with supplies for sixteen months but arrived carrying less than a year's provisions after an abnormally long five-month ocean crossing. A two-year drought imperiled both sides of the fight as dry weather decimated the region's cash and subsistence crops. For the Spanish, the drought hampered their attacks as they became increasingly reliant on the importation of provisions from abroad to supply their growing military presence. For the Dutch, by August and September 1652, the drought-induced supply crises led the High Council to write that if Recife were attacked they would be forced to surrender. The arrival of six supply ships from the Netherlands and the return of rain and manioc crops, however, only delayed the Company's eventual defeat by a few months.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>230</sup> "Letter from James Henderson to President and Council," January 29, 1647, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 63.7.

<sup>231</sup> Boxer, *Dutch Brazil*, 229, 234.

The Portuguese Planters' Revolt, ignited by indigenous resistance movements in Maranhão and Ceará nearly a decade earlier, finally forced the Company to surrender Brazil to Portugal in January 1654. During negotiations with Portugal, Company leaders petitioned on behalf of their indigenous allies and included a provision that the Portuguese pardon the *Brasilianen*. As news of the Dutch defeat spread throughout Brazil, however, the Company's *Brasilianen* allies fled to Ceará where the Portuguese presence was weak. The *Brasilianen* feared the Portuguese planters would not be as forgiving as Portuguese commanders ordered them to be. The Company's indigenous allies felt abandoned by their Dutch allies. The *Brasilianen* "did nothing but swear and curse the Dutch whom they had served and assisted so faithfully for many years."<sup>232</sup> The *Brasilianen* petitioned the Dutch for compensation for their work over the next decade but after failing several times to receive any financial recourse, eventually resigned themselves to life under Portuguese rule.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Meuwese, *Partners in Trade*, 180-181.

<sup>233</sup> For more on Dutch relations with the indigenous peoples of Brazil after 1654, see: Mark Meuwese, "From Dutch Allies to Portuguese Vassals," in Michiel van Groesen, ed., *The Legacy of Dutch Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

### Part III: Curaçao, 1634-1662

“Likewise, they on their part, each for themselves, promise, on pain of corporeal punishment, that they shall not hunt, catch, kill nor in any way injure the Company’s livestock, such as horses, cattle, goats, sheep and pigs; not plunder the Indians gardens.”

– Peter Stuyvesant, *Freedoms and Exemptions granted to the Company’s servants* (1643)<sup>1</sup>



Map of Curaçao. Claes Jansz. Visscher, c. 1640.

Van der Hagen Atlas, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague

<sup>1</sup> “Freedoms and Exemptions grant to the Company’s servants,” March 10, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 16.

## 7. Indigenous Adaptation and Resilience

Curaçao, a tiny, semi-arid island in the southern Caribbean, lay at the center of the Dutch Republic's imperial ambitions for much of the seventeenth century. At the dawn of the century, the Dutch prized the island for its abundant salt flats. By century's end, however, the Dutch had altered the island's primary purpose as it became clear that it made for a better trade entrepôt than salt supply. The story of Curaçao's transformation is as much a story of global trade currents as it is of weather and indigenous peoples. The island's semi-arid climate created salt Dutch merchants need for the Dutch Republic's herring industry and also catalyzed a resistance movement against the Dutch West India Company by the island's indigenous Caquetios.

The Company's "Grand Design" included plans to establish a Company foothold in the Caribbean in addition to its growing presence in Brazil and West Africa. The seizure of Recife and Pernambuco in 1630 provided a convenient and strategic site from which to claim uninhabited islands and launch assaults on European-controlled islands in the southern Caribbean. Within the next decade the Dutch had expanded their global empire to include the islands of St. Martin (1631); St. Eustatius (1635); Saba (1640); and Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire (1634). The Dutch had little trouble in obtaining these islands as the Spanish empire had decreed them to be *islas inútiles* or useless islands and thus maintained little to no military presence on them. In contrast, the Company competed with French, English, Spanish, and Swedish forces for control of Anguilla, St. Croix, Tobago, and the Virgin Islands, but never retained control of these islands for a significant period of time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast*, 116-140, 258-283.

Dutch interest in the Caribbean spiked due to a peculiar predicament involving a rather malodorous fish and the Dutch Republic's 80-year revolt against Spanish rule (1568-1648).<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the fifteenth century, fishermen trawled the North Sea hauling in herring destined for sale and consumption throughout the Low Countries, a tradition that continues today and is marked each spring when the first herring (*nieuwe haring*) is auctioned off and its proceeds donated to charitable causes. The success of this commodity, however, was dependent on another: salt. A rarity in the fluvial Dutch countryside, Dutch merchants found salt in plenty along the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula. The Low Countries, at the time a part of the Spanish Habsburgs' empire, traded frequently with the Spanish and Portuguese who gladly welcomed the chance to trade their salt for the lumber and grain Dutch merchants brought from the Baltics.<sup>4</sup> William the Orange's revolt against the Spanish Habsburgs, however, threatened this lucrative and mutually-beneficial arrangement.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch Revolt did not immediately end Dutch-Spanish trade ties, though. Initially, Spain's Philip II allowed the continuation of trade between the Low Countries, Spain, and Portugal due to the Iberian Peninsula's dependency on Dutch goods. By 1585, with the inchoate Dutch Republic slowly escaping his grasp, Philip II decided to risk an end to the trade and issued an embargo forbidding Dutch merchants and salt carriers from entering Spanish waters.

The Dutch Republic's scramble for salt began almost immediately. Private fish merchants desperately needed a reliable salt supply to stave off financial ruin, not to mention the potential stench of rotting herring piling up in Dutch warehouses. For a brief period, Dutch trawlers relied

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<sup>3</sup> Bo Poulson, *Dutch Herring: An Environmental History, c. 1600-1860* (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2008)

<sup>4</sup> Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 18-20.

<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the Dutch Revolt, see: Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 169-537.

upon salt from the Spanish-controlled Cape Verde Islands, but the islands carried too much risk as a long-term prospect. Merchants continued to sail further south along the African coast finding little salt to cure the problem of rotting fish back home. The herring industry breathed a sigh of relief, though, after private voyages to the Caribbean returned carrying loads and reports of salt. By 1598, the salt flats of Punta de Araya off the coast of Venezuela teemed with Dutch salt carriers. It would remain this way until after Philip II lifted his embargo and the Dutch signed the Twelve Years' Truce (1609-1621).<sup>6</sup>

In addition to salt Dutch merchants also returned carrying brazilwood (*Caesalpinia echinata*). Portuguese explorers in South America had identified this tree as a relative of a known Asian species that was used as a red dye known as *lignum brasilium* or simply brazilin meaning “red like an ember.” The name Brazil originated with Fernão de Noronha, a Portuguese merchant, who referred to Brazil as *Terra do Brasil* or “land of brazilwood.”<sup>7</sup> While the dye-producing tree inhabited mainland Brazil, Dutch sailors found it growing throughout the southern Caribbean and especially on Bonaire.<sup>8</sup> When neither salt nor wood could be found, sanctioned and illicit trade with Spanish and French ships offered a third alternative for profits.

Not everyone who traveled to the Caribbean focused on trade. Several individuals attempted to create plantation settlements after the Dutch West India Company was officially chartered in 1621. In December of 1635, Jan Slouck, a mariner from Flushing, received permission from the Zeeland Chamber to establish a colony in the southern Caribbean. After a failed attempt at occupying St. Croix, he managed to colonize St. Eustatius. For his efforts, the

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<sup>6</sup> Cornelis Christiaan Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam* (The Hague, the Netherlands: M. Nijhoff, 1979), 20–21.

<sup>7</sup> For the importance of Brazil's Brazilwood during Dutch colonization, see: Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), ch. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast*, 260.

Company granted Slouch and his colonists a ten-year exemption from duties except on “salt, wood, and ‘other products delivered by nature itself.’”<sup>9</sup> As a result, the island’s colonists wrought profits through the cultivation of tobacco and later sugar. Both crops required extensive labor supplies. The colonists captured and traded Natives from nearby islands in order to fill these positions. The inhabitants also claimed the island of Saba in 1640, constructed a fort there, and harvested cotton, coffee, indigo, and tobacco.<sup>10</sup>

A lack of fresh water, hostile indigenous groups, and barren landscapes initially precluded the Company itself from making any formidable claims in the Caribbean. In 1633, however, the English re-captured St. Martin (the Company’s primary salt supplier) and the Company felt a new urgency to establish a Caribbean stronghold. The ABC islands emerged as the Company’s top choice. Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao were located approximately 50 miles north of mainland Venezuela, the latter two were known to have salt pans and stands of brazilwood, and Curaçao had a natural, defensible, and deep harbor. On April 16, 1634, the Company approved an expedition to seize the islands from Spanish hands and establish a trading post that could be used by merchants moving throughout the Atlantic.<sup>11</sup> The Company gained full control of the islands by the end of August 1634 due to the limited Spanish presence on the islands and with the help of several Indian guides.<sup>12</sup> The Spanish made several attempts to recover the ABC islands over the next decade, but all failed.

The Company’s expansion in the Caribbean ground to a halt by the early 1640s just as it had in Brazil. The Company’s first retreat came when they attempted to establish a salt mine on

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 262-263.

<sup>11</sup> Most Company vessels, whether they departed from the Low Countries or West Africa or were headed to or from Brazil or the Hudson River Valley, typically first stopped in Curaçao.

<sup>12</sup> Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean*, 263-269.

the Spanish mainland (Venezuela). In August 1640, the Company made plans to access salt pans along the Unare River.<sup>13</sup> The Unare was well-suited for sustaining workers. It provided fresh water, ample food, and wood supplies could be found nearby. The Dutch made quick work in constructing a fort and establishing native allies in the area, but the Spanish did not tolerate the Company's presence. After a direct assault on the Company's fort failed, the Spanish commander decided to destroy the salt pan itself. He ordered a small canal dug that could dilute the pan with the river's fresh water.<sup>14</sup>

The Dutch still required additional salt and so the Company, undeterred by Spanish malfeasance, turned its attention back to St. Martin. In 1644, eleven years after they had first lost the island to the Spanish, the Dutch sent another expedition under the command of Peter Stuyvesant, the director of Curaçao at the time. By this point, however, Stuyvesant's forces on Curaçao were near a breaking point due to a prolonged drought, famine conditions, and indigenous threat.

Curaçao is situated 34 miles off Venezuela's northern coast and sandwiched between Aruba, 70 miles to its west, and Bonaire, 50 miles to its east. With an area of only 171 square miles, it is just twice the size of Washington, D.C. The northern coastline is a veritable fortress of cliffs and rocky outcroppings, while the southern coast is resplendent with multiple bays and harbors well suited to oceanic respites and secure ship moorings. The low and hilly terrain stretches 38 miles long and seven miles at its widest. On average, only 24 inches of precipitation falls on the island annually.<sup>15</sup> Less than an inch per month falls during the dry season (March-June) while the island's wettest months (October-December) receive around four inches each. Its

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<sup>13</sup> An earlier attempt had failed in 1634.

<sup>14</sup> Goslinga, *Dutch in the Caribbean*, 134-135.

<sup>15</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Fact Book: Curaçao," February 17, 2014, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cc.html>.



small size, defensible geography, salt flats, and secure harbors made it an ideal place for the Company to establish a stronghold in a fiercely contested Caribbean. However, the Company first had to appease the island's indigenous Caquetio.

The indigenous peoples of Curaçao exemplify the importance of adaptation in climate history and offer an example of human resilience. Over time, the collective memory of Curaçao's indigenous population allowed them to improve their societal resistance to extreme weather and to thrive on the island. When Europeans arrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the Caquetios had become well adapted to the island's arid environment. They utilized their knowledge to delay the worst effects of European colonialism.

Arawak peoples, the island's first inhabitants according to most archaeologists, arrived on Curaçao from the northern coast of present-day Venezuela sometime around 5000-4000 B.P. During this period the southern Caribbean cooled and dried after what had been a rather long, warm, and moist period that began around 10,000 B.P at the onset of the Holocene.<sup>16</sup> This change towards cooler and drier conditions was caused by a shift in the mean latitude of the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), itself susceptible to the influences of El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events and climatic variability in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>17</sup> Ascertaining the influence of this climatic shift on the movement of Natives throughout the Caribbean and their arrival on Curaçao is difficult, but it is a question worth posing.<sup>18</sup> Historical climatologists have laid the groundwork for understanding how climatic shifts in various locations have led to

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<sup>16</sup> Jay B. Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography on Curaçao*, Natuurwetenschappelijke Studiekring Voor Suriname En de Nederlandse Antillen 120 (Amsterdam, 1987), 19.

<sup>17</sup> Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 790–93.

<sup>18</sup> For the classic work on Arawak diaspora, see: Irving Rouse, *The Tainos: Rise & Decline of the People Who Greeted Columbus* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992).

conflict, abandonment, and dislocation of peoples in the past.<sup>19</sup> The increasingly dry Caribbean climate that began around 5000 B.P. possibly led to resource scarcity on the mainland, induced societal conflict, and led to a migration of indigenous peoples to southern Caribbean islands.

Between 5000 B.P. and 3000 B.P. the climate continued to cool and precipitation increased. This respite provided the necessary context for a Curaçaoan population to establish themselves on the island before a long-term drying pattern resumed around 3000 B.P.<sup>20</sup> The presence of stone and shell tools demonstrates that Curaçao's early inhabitants subsisted on a combination of hunting and gathering during this initial period of settlement. The return of drier conditions, however, pressured Curaçao's earliest human inhabitants to adapt. When water supplies began to dry up, paleolithic peoples became more reliant on gathering, small game hunting, and fishing.<sup>21</sup> Despite living on a relatively small island, Curaçao's earliest inhabitants demonstrated a remarkable capacity to adapt and thrive in a mercurial environment.<sup>22</sup> What followed this early settlement period were centuries of continued adaptation to Curaçao's variable climate.

The broad contours of a unique agricultural, political, social, and cultural identity, prevalent on the Curaçao when Europeans first arrived, roughly overlapped with the warmer and drier climate that began around 3000 B.P.<sup>23</sup> A lack of archaeological evidence puts into question the extent to which the island was inhabited for the period between 3000 to 1500 B.P., but the excavation of lithic agricultural implements dating to 1400 B.P. strongly suggests that by this

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<sup>19</sup> The two most recent synthesis of these phenomena include John L. Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History* and William C. Foster, *Climate and Culture Change in North America, A.D. 900 - 1600* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Havisser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Peter E. Siegel, *Early Ceramic Population Lifeways and Adaptive Strategies in the Caribbean* (Oxford, England: BAR, 1989); Scott M. Fitzpatrick and William F. Keegan, "Human Impacts and Adaptations in the Caribbean Islands: An Historical Ecology Approach," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh-Earth Sciences* 98 (2007): 29–45.

<sup>23</sup> Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 1304–8.

time the island was populated by Paleo-Indians deploying agriculture techniques necessary to fortify themselves against increasingly common Caribbean droughts.<sup>24</sup> This period perhaps more than any other helps in understanding the adaptive capacity of Curaçao's earliest inhabitants and provides hints to how the Caquetios who inhabited the island when Dutch merchants arrived at the beginning of the seventeenth century might have survived periodic droughts.<sup>25</sup> During this time period Paleo-Indians developed significant technological and agricultural innovations that increased their adaptive capacity.

In response to an increasingly dry climate, indigenous groups throughout the Caribbean developed and practiced a drought-resilient system of mixed subsistence agriculture known as *conuco* agriculture. The *conuco* agricultural system relied on shifting cultivation strategies that made it well suited to the southern Caribbean's variable climate, especially its seasonal dry spells and prolonged periods of droughts. The system's unique combination of propagation methods, timing of planting and harvest, and the selection of specific crop varieties improved its practitioners' chances of survival.

Fresh water proved the most essential and difficult-to-find resource for the survival of Curaçao's inhabitants. Two prehistoric types of fresh-water sources existed on the island: fresh water springs and water run-off catchments. Due to the predominance of basalt soils on Curaçao, which do not retain water on a long-term basis, water catchments were most likely isolated to limestone areas that typically provide an impervious bottom. Based on these requirements, 48

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<sup>24</sup> Havisser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 52, 148, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Jose Oliver argues that the Caquetio first emerged out of the Proto-Maipuran divergence that began as early as 1500 B.C in Venezuela. The Caquetio's ancestors moved along the Apure and into the Upper Llanos. Here their ancestors split into two distinct traditions: Dabajuroid Tradition and Tierroid Tradition. The Caquetio emerged from the later in the Yaracuy Valley before moving into Venezuela's west coast and finally, around A.D. 900, onto the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, see: Jose R. Oliver, "The Archaeological, Linguistic and Ethnohistorical Evidence for the Expansion of Arawakan into Northwestern Venezuela and Northeastern Colombia," (PhD Diss: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1989).

suitable locations for prehistoric water run-off catchments existed including the underground lake of Shingot Cave.<sup>26</sup> Water run-off systems though are prone to evaporation during dry periods and are not reliable water sources under such conditions. When the climate began to dry in 3000 B.P, indigenous peoples would have had to adapt their agricultural practices to account for decreased water supplies or alternatively construct some type of irrigation canals stemming from the island's three fresh water springs (themselves dependent on rainfall).<sup>27</sup> The lack of archaeological evidence supporting the construction of any such waterworks suggests that the Caquetios developed techniques of *conuco* agriculture, instead.<sup>28</sup>

The *conuco* system began with the selection of a suitable plot of land. In choosing sites indigenous peoples preferred areas within close proximity to settlements. Proximity allowed for convenient access for the day-to-day tasks of weeding as well as the seasonal tasks of planting and harvesting. Not any piece of land, however, would do. Soil needed to be light, easy to work, and porous enough to stave-off waterlogging and root rot when heavy rains occasionally fell.<sup>29</sup>

Once indigenous peoples identified suitable soils they then prepared the soil for cultivation. This process ideally occurred during the dry season so as to ensure the land was ready for plantings when rains came between October and February.<sup>30</sup> The land was first cleared using a form of "slash-and-burn" that came with the added benefit of introducing valuable nutrients into

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<sup>26</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 31–33; Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 31–33.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Soil studies on Curaçao indicate approximately 8260 hectares of land that match these criteria and which can be considered potential agricultural sites, see: Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 36. If one accepts the conclusions cited by David Watts that 0.2 to 0.5 hectares of *conuco* farmed land were able to sustain one person in wet locales, it seems that on Curaçao, a semi-arid locale, might have had ample resources to support a thriving population. Though, it is nearly impossible to ascertain to what extent the suitable land was actually utilized. David Watts, *The West Indies: Patterns of Development, Culture and Environmental Change since 1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 55.

<sup>30</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 24. According to Havisier, most rain falls between the months of September and December. See Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 13.

the top layer of soil. Then they molded the soil into mounds meant to improve the soil's drainage. A properly maintained *conuco* site, once completed, could retain essential soil nutrients for upwards of 15 to 20 years, providing its users thousands of calories annually.<sup>31</sup>

Manioc, also known as yuca or cassava, emerged as the most valuable cultivated crop on Curaçao.<sup>32</sup> Manioc is naturally drought resistant and grew well in the island's slightly alkaline to slightly acidic soils.<sup>33</sup> A single planting of manioc could be harvested several times, each time providing its consumer a meal rich in calories and starch. Any manioc not immediately consumed was baked into an unleavened flat bread. This bread could be stored for long periods and used during drought-induced famines.<sup>34</sup>

Scholars have suggested two additional domesticated crops cultivated on Curaçao that supplemented manioc. The first was maize. Maize, in general, requires slightly denser soils that can retain more water compared to the lighter, easily drained soils needed for manioc cultivation. Though archaeologists have uncovered various tools to suggest the cultivation of maize, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent maize played a role in indigenous peoples' subsistence strategy. Maize's high water requirements together with the relatively low levels of precipitation on Curaçao and lack of any form of pre-historic irrigation system suggests that maize was perhaps only sporadically planted by the Caquetios.<sup>35</sup>

Sweet potatoes were also used to supplement manioc. The Caquetios' close relatives in northwest Venezuela and other Arawak groups cultivated sweet potatoes and there is a high

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<sup>31</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 56–57.

<sup>32</sup> Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 52.

<sup>33</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 57; A. J. de Vries, "The Semi-Arid Environment of Curaçao: A Geochemical Soil Survey," *Geologie En Mijnbouw* 79, no. 4 (2000), 485.

<sup>34</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 35–36, 52; Gregorio Hernandez de Alba, "Tribes of Northwestern Venezuela," ed. Julian H. Steward, *Handbook of South American Indians, Volume 4: The Circum-Caribbean Tribes* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), 470; Watts, *West Indies*, 58.

likelihood that sweet potatoes were cultivated on Curaçao as well.<sup>36</sup> Sweet potatoes require slightly more moisture than manioc but considerably less moisture than maize. Sweet potatoes offer its cultivators several benefits. Unlike manioc that requires at least eight months before it can be harvested, sweet potatoes can be harvested in as little as four months after planting. Additionally, when planted as part of a multi-crop system, they can be utilized as ground cover, potentially reducing evaporation rates.

Gender-based divisions of labor were deeply embedded in the *conuco* system. Men selected and cleared new sites, set fire to clear the area, hoed and mounded the fields, and planted cuttings for new growth. Women took over day-to-day maintenance after the field was prepared. They weeded and harvested when necessary, though no single harvesting season dominated the Caquetios' calendar.<sup>37</sup> Instead, harvesting took place sporadically based on necessity and fruit ripeness, providing essential foodstuffs throughout the year. The high frequency of small harvests even came to drive the Caquetios' understanding of time – they determined time based on the ripening of plants rather than astronomical observations.<sup>38</sup> *Conuco* agriculture thus provided the peoples of Curaçao a variety of possible food stuffs to stave off moderate drought periods and insulate themselves during potentially longer drought episodes.

The Caquetios also foraged a variety of Curaçao's wild plants. Two stand out. Cocuy (*Agave cocui*) provided important amino acids to low protein diets and was used in the making of rope, baskets, nets, and hammocks. Maguey (*Fucraeas macrophylla*) was fermented by circum-Caribbean Arawak groups into an intoxicating beverage and easily grew in Curaçao's arid, rocky

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<sup>36</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 58; Hernandez de Alba, "Tribes of Northwestern Venezuela," 470; Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Watts, *West Indies*, 58–59.

<sup>38</sup> Hernandez de Alba, "Tribes of Northwestern Venezuela," 474.

environment.<sup>39</sup> Curaçao's neighboring indigenous groups such as the Goajira utilized additional wild plants such as elephant ear or yautia (*Xanthosoma* sp.), prickly pear (*Opuntia* sp.), organ cactus (*Carnegiea gigantea*), and divi-divi (*Caesalpinia coriaria*).<sup>40</sup> Archaeologists suspect Curaçao's inhabitants might have foraged these wild plants as well but have found no evidence to support their theory. Wild and domesticated crops provided Curaçao's inhabitants an additional source of vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates. Cassava, though, remained the central staple.

Caquetios turned to the island's naturally abundant supply of wildlife during drought periods to supplement any decline in harvestable plants. While no evidence has been found to support the Caquetios' domestication of animals, it is clear from archaeological dig sites that they hunted and foraged quite successfully. The island's wildlife provided essential sources of protein and fats. Atlantic pearl oysters (*Pinctada radiata*), queen conch (*Strombus gigas*), and sundry shellfish species comprised the main protein staples while rodents, iguanas, birds, and deer appear to have been secondary in the Caquetios diet.<sup>41</sup> Collectively, they proved an important source of calories in times of agricultural crises.

The arrival of Spanish ships in Curaçao's harbors beginning in 1499 immediately changed the Caquetios' way-of-life. Spanish officials found little value in the island's natural resources beyond its stands of brazilwood. By 1513, after denuding the landscape of dye-woods and failing to find precious metals, they declared Curaçao and its neighbors Aruba and Bonaire *islas inútiles*

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<sup>39</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 21, 54–55; Hernandez de Alba, "Tribes of Northwestern Venezuela," 470.

<sup>40</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 22. Elephant ear, a high-yielding crop with a long storage life, would have been especially useful to the Caquetios, see: Watts, *West Indies*, 58.

<sup>41</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 21–25, 29, 37–38, 52–56; Hernandez de Alba, "Tribes of Northwestern Venezuela," 470.

or useless islands. In doing so, Spanish officials opened Curaçao's doors to *indieros* or Indian hunters.

The earliest population estimates for Curaçao indicate that at the dawn of the sixteenth century approximately 2,000 Caquetios were spread out across the island. They resided in the four principal villages of Santa Cruz, Ascension, Santa Anna Bay, and Santa Barbara. It did not take long for *indieros* to exploit the island's human population. In 1515, under Spanish supervision, nearly 2,000 indigenous peoples on Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao were captured, enslaved, and exported to Hispaniola.<sup>42</sup>

Slave raids on Curaçao continued for a decade until 1526 when the Spanish factor of Hispaniola, Juan de Ampués, ordered their discontinuation. The human toll of Spain's slave raids might have meant the end of Curaçao's indigenous population. However, by 1528, the island's indigenous population had rebounded to 400. Of these, 200 had been repatriated to the island in 1525 by Ampués for unknown reasons. The others seem to have arrived from the Spanish Main after fleeing Tierra Firma, the northwestern coast of modern-day Venezuela, hoping to escape slavery and forced labor. Collectively, the 400 Natives found themselves nominally under Spanish supervision and isolated in the villages of Ascension and Santa Anna Bay.<sup>43</sup>

Spanish exploitation of Curaçao exacted more than a human toll. Spanish manipulation, exploitation, and newly introduced plant and animal species had disturbed Curaçao's ecology. By 1530, a slew of European cattle, horses, pigs, and goats roamed the island. Ampués additionally

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<sup>42</sup> Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, 13–14.

<sup>43</sup> Havisier Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 57; Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, 15–17.



had a variety of fruit trees, particularly orange, pomegranate, and lemons, planted.<sup>44</sup> Together, the new flora and fauna altered the island's ecology and the Caquetios' way-of-life.<sup>45</sup>

The Caquetios adapted well to the newly introduced European plants and animals, incorporating many of them into their subsistence strategies. The success of introduced species, however, varied. By 1630, according to a Dutch account, the fecund livestock had expanded to 2,000 cattle; 9,000 sheep and lamb; 750 horses; 1,000 goats; and an indefinite number of pigs. The Caquetios became valued by the Dutch for their skills in wrangling and hunting these European livestock.<sup>46</sup> Ampués' fruit trees also established themselves on the island but with less success compared to livestock. When Company sailors arrived to the island in 1634, they found orange trees scattered sporadically across the island and were particularly struck by how well orange trees grew in Indian-tended gardens. When severe drought set in around 1641, the oranges taunted hungry Dutch soldiers to the extent that Company officials had to issue an official decree forbidding soldiers from plundering the Native's fruit groves under penalty of death.<sup>47</sup>

European-introduced food stuffs became essential parts of the Caquetios' diet, but the Spanish presence on the island also translated into the end of more traditional Caquetio foodstuffs. This is most notably seen in the Caquetios' changed oyster preferences. Prior to Spanish arrival, the Caquetios relied heavily upon the oyster species *Pinctada radiata*. This specific species, however, faded around 1500 after Spanish colonists arrived and was replaced by

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<sup>44</sup> Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> For examples of the ecological impact of European-introduced species on the Americas, see: Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*; Elinor G. K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Karl Butzer and Elisabeth K. Butzer, "Transfer of the Mediterranean Livestock Economy to New Spain: Adaptation and Ecological Consequences," in *Global Land Use: A Perspective from the Columbian Encounter*, 1995, 151–93; Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*.

<sup>46</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 38–39.

<sup>47</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 38–39.

an increased reliance on chitons (large marine mollusks), different oyster species (*Ostrea muricatus*, *Ostrea equestris*, and *Isognomon alatus*), and mussels (*Brachidontes exustus*).

The change in diet represented a shift in the Caquetios' settlement locations. The earlier species were drawn mostly from the southern coast while the newly prevalent species were naturally more abundant along the island's northern coast.<sup>48</sup> This is indicative of a settlement shift away from the more hospitable southern coastal regions and towards rockier northern regions. Why the Caquetios abandoned the southern coast is unclear, but it seems possible that they were attempting to avoid contact with the Spanish who favored and populated the southern coast. Archeologists have also noted a decrease in mammal and reptile remains around Caquetios dig sites that coincided with their shifting shellfish preferences. While archeologist Jay Haviser, Jr. suggests this decline might be attributed to the difficulty in transporting reptiles from their primary habitats along the south coast bays back to inland villages, his reasoning does not account for the latent potential for conflict between the Caquetios and Spanish. Nor does it account for changes in the island's ecology due to the flourishing livestock population.<sup>49</sup> The heavy presence of European livestock must have exerted a tremendous pressure on the island's fragile ecosystem and threatened many of the secondary species upon which the Caquetios relied.

Curaçao's importance to the Spanish began to fade following the death of Juan de Ampués in 1533. The island came under the supervision of the *Audiencia* of Santo Domingo which prohibited settlement on the island without prior permission.<sup>50</sup> As time passed so did the island

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<sup>48</sup> Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 26–27.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27.

<sup>50</sup> In the interim, Ampués's successor and son-in-law, Lázaro Bejarano, briefly lived on the island, before fleeing in 1540 in the company of the poet Juan de Castellanos after the death of Bejarano's only child.

pass from the minds of Spanish officials. The Caquetios were left to their own accord, presumably free to continue their lives on the now neglected, though nominally Spanish island.<sup>51</sup>

Adapting to changing and shifting climatic and ecological conditions was deeply embedded in Caquetio culture and tradition. In this way, incorporating newly introduced plant and animal species into a subsistence lifestyle appears remarkably sensible. Doing so allowed the Caquetios to reestablish themselves on Curaçao after a devastating period of Spanish enslavement and rule. In the interim years between Spanish near-abandonment and the 1634 arrival of Dutch Company forces, the Caquetio population rebounded slightly from 400 in 1528 to nearly 450.<sup>52</sup> This small force proved both a helpful ally and a formidable obstacle during the Company's inchoate years on the island.

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<sup>51</sup> Goslinga, *A Short History of the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam*, 17–18.

<sup>52</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 58.

## 8. Negotiating Drought & Empire

Initially, the Dutch West India Company had a relatively easy time securing Curaçao. The island's naturally deep harbors, advantageous location along the shipping route between Brazil and New Netherland, and, of course, its salt flats drew the Company's attention and ultimately propelled the Company to mount a military assault to acquire the island.<sup>53</sup> It did not take long for some 240 Company forces to wrest control of Curaçao from Spanish hands. The Company forces, led by Johannes van Walbeeck, met only limited resistance during their assault that lasted from July 28 to August 21, 1634. A small contingent of five or six Spanish troops led by Lope López de Morla occupied the island at the time, though they were supported by approximately 100 able-bodied Natives, presumably Caquetios. The Caquetios' loyalty to the Spanish was tenuous. Before the Dutch had even seized the island, the Company had already succeeded in bringing one indigenous man, later known as Balthazar de Montero, into their fold. The Company won Balthazar's allegiance after an early morning reconnaissance mission stumbled upon his scouting party. After Company soldiers shot Balthazar, his party, presuming him dead, left him to die. The Company nursed Balthazar back to health and in return he provided the Company important geographical information about the island. He even led the Company to the final, secluded encampment of Curaçao's remaining indigenous defenders. The Company took the encampment by surprise and the Caquetios surrendered. De Morla surrendered the island a few days later, thus beginning a period of Dutch control which continues still today.<sup>54</sup> Despite a relatively easily won victory, drought, scarcity, and mounting threats from the Caquetios defined the Company's inchoate years on Curaçao.

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<sup>53</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 82; Haviser Jr., *Amerindian Cultural Geography*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 43–58.

The Company's 1634 attack occurred during a particularly dry spell that was followed a few years later by a three-year drought lasting from 1641 to 1644.<sup>55</sup> Dutch farmers quickly found the dry weather insurmountable and failed to yield crops from the island's soil. Company leaders responded to failed agricultural efforts by requesting provisions from New Netherland and the Republic. When these requests went unfulfilled, they turned to the Caquetios for help. The Caquetios understood their importance to the Company's tenuous position on Curaçao and leveraged it to their benefit. They deployed prototypical "weapons of the weak" in order to force Dutch concessions and gain new rights and freedoms.<sup>56</sup> Caquetios used foot-dragging, desertion, false compliance, and the play-off system. The Caquetios' threats struck fear in Dutch leaders. The Company's presence on the island was unsustainable without the help of the Caquetios who wrangled the island's livestock and helped cultivate the dry soil. In order to maintain these relationship, the Company had little recourse but to negotiate with the Caquetios after they began resisting.

Johannes van Walbeeck's first order as Curaçao's newest European leader called for all indigenous inhabitants to report for an official counting. All told, 402 indigenous peoples including 105 able-bodied men reported. Van Walbeeck, however, remained skeptical of their allegiances and ordered all but 20 families, totaling 75 individuals, to leave for Coro in Venezuela along with the captured Spanish forces. The remaining indigenous peoples found

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<sup>55</sup> Proxy-based reconstructions of the southern Caribbean are largely derived from analyses of core samples taken from the anoxic Cariaco Basin located off the north-central coast of Venezuela. Analysis of titanium and iron concentrations suggest a period of drier conditions during the Little Ice Age. Particular to this study, low titanium concentrations indicative of below-average rainfall occurred between 1639 and 1649, see: Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 1306.

<sup>56</sup> I derive my conception of the Caquetios' resistance against the Company from James C. Scott's notion of the "weapons of the weak." According to Scott, these are the "ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups" and included "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on." He argues these forms of resistance were used by the peasantry against those who sought to "extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them." See: Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, xvi.

themselves splintered, relocated, and forced into servitude. Van Walbeeck chose to retain 23 Natives at his camp as servants and let the remaining 50 return to the Indian village at Ascensión, presumably to live as they wished in a drastically altered cultural and ecological environment. Coerced into forced labor, the Caquetios leveraged their local ecological knowledge to meet the dual threat of climate and Dutch colonialism.<sup>57</sup>

Two official Company documents codified how Company leaders on Curaçao, in general, were to treat indigenous peoples. The original Company charter, written by the Lords of the States General in 1621, granted the joint-stock company sundry rights and exemptions including the authority to “make contracts, commitments and alliances with the princes and Natives of the countries” within the Company’s defined, monopolistic territory.<sup>58</sup> The official Company policy regarding Curaçao’s indigenous peoples went a step further. It deeded the Company’s vested authority over to the island’s directors and granted them “supreme authority and command...over...Natives of [Curaçao],” and charged them to “vigorously enforce and observe the ordinances...that no one shall cause any violence or fraud on the Natives of [Curaçao].”<sup>59</sup> Official policy, open to broad interpretation and difficult to enforce, rarely correlated to reality. In actuality, far from any Company oversight, Dutch leaders could exact whatever policies they wished.

The harsh ecological conditions of the island’s semi-arid environment proved an enigma to Company newcomers. Dutch merchants had plied the Caribbean’s waters for nearly two decades, but settlement colonies were a new and foreign venture replete with their own set of obstacles and difficulties. Chief amongst these was learning how to draw “everything from the soil of the

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<sup>57</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 58–59.

<sup>58</sup> “Charter of the Dutch West India Company,” 1621, *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts*, 90.

<sup>59</sup> “Instructions from the West India Company to Jacob Tolck and Council,” August 15, 1640, *Curaçao Papers*, 2.

country through agriculture,” a task expressly charged to Curaçao’s directors.<sup>60</sup> The efforts expended in pursuit of this charge, however, appear meek. In 1635, Laurens Pietersz, a farmer and the first private colonist, arrived aboard the *Salm* accompanied by two farmhands. Pietersz was joined in his toils by Jan Claeszoon van Campen, sent to Curaçao for his knowledge of salt making and agriculture. Neither had much success in reaping nourishment from the soil. After briefly experimenting with rye and wheat seeds sent over from the Dutch Republic, all of which failed to sprout, Pietersz and his farmhands enlisted in the Company. Clearly reaping ones daily bread from the island’s soils proved a more daunting task than the *Heren XIX* had earlier envisioned.<sup>61</sup>

Unable to yield fruit from the dry soils of Curaçao, the Company sought sustenance elsewhere. They first tried to request additional provisions from the *Heren XIX*. The Board, however, was only able to supply Curaçao on a limited and sporadic basis. Next they tried to secure succor from other Company colonies in the Americas. Brazil was the first option while New Netherland, partially established as a provisioning colony for the Caribbean, had yet to find firm footing and was experiencing its own extreme weather events that made it impossible to spare food provisions.<sup>62</sup>

The repercussions of scarce provisions resulted in several potentially devastating situations. The most pressing concern for the Company’s leaders on the island seems to have come when soldiers, now more-or-less construction workers and salt miners, refused to work – first in June of 1635 and then again in February of 1636.<sup>63</sup> Company leaders also feared that the Spanish might learn of the dire straits under which the Dutch clung to Curaçao and launch an

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>61</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 91–93.

<sup>62</sup> Koot, *Empire at the Periphery*, 80.

<sup>63</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 73, 76–77.

immediate assault to re-take the island. Over the Company's first decade of occupation on the island, the Caquetios proved important though often reluctant allies in thwarting and assuaging all of these latent threats.

The Company and Caquetios forged a pragmatic, yet mercurial relationship. This relationship wavered depending on the fluctuating value each perceived in the other. If the Company abused the relationship, the Caquetios could always turn to the Spanish. Beginning with enlisting the help of Balzathar to seize control of the island from Spain, Dutch officials increasingly came to see the value and importance of the Caquetios for their knowledge of the island, malleable relationship with the Spanish, and skills in corralling the island's now abundant population of horses and livestock. The Caquetios could and did, however, use their position to force Dutch leaders into providing them greater freedoms and exemptions by threatening violent and non-violent resistance.

Early on, Johannes Van Walbeeck and his Council realized the value in Caquetios' geographical knowledge of the island. Dutch interrogations and conversations (the record remains unclear about what information was given freely and what was coerced) garnered a bevy of information regarding the island's landscape. Balzathar's knowledge of hideouts, as has already been shown, led to the immediate capture of Spain's indigenous allies. As a result, Van Walbeeck conferred Balzathar with the title "Captain of the Indians" and placed him in charge of the island's remaining indigenous population. Three days after receiving his commission as "Captain of the Indians," Balzathar escorted Van Walbeeck on a tour of Curaçao. Balzathar's aid in mapping the island proved essential to the Company's territorial claims.



Description, as historian Patricia Seed argues, laid at the center of Dutch ceremonies of possession.<sup>64</sup> This was no different in the case of Curaçao and Balzathar made this task significantly easier. Together, Van Walbeeck and Balzathar set out from Santa Anna Bay to conduct an inventory of Curaçao. They first stopped at Santa Barbara Bay which Van Walbeeck found more suitable than Santa Anna Bay for blocking Spanish offensives. The tour continued over several days, stopping at various smaller bays, the island's salt flats, and four Indian villages of which only two remained inhabited. Van Walbeeck later compiled this information with information he gathered during a coastal survey and included it in a hand-sketched map that he sent back to Amsterdam.<sup>65</sup> The *Heren XIX* then used the details included in Van Walbeeck's map and supplementary reports in their final decision to retain control of Curaçao.

Balzathar's knowledge traveled across the Atlantic and into the maps of one of the Netherlands's most well-known cartographers, Claes Jansz Visscher. Visscher probably used Van Walbeeck's map and supplementary reports to create a descriptive map of Curaçao.<sup>66</sup> One of the earliest known maps of Curaçao, this map provided information about the Company's knowledge of Curaçao and details what natural resources they deemed important. First, there is a detailed accounting of the location of the livestock remaining on the island, principally steer, cows, sheep, and wild horses. Second, each lake is identified as a potential source of salt or fresh water. Third, indigenous villages are indicated. Finally, while importance is ascribed to livestock and

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<sup>64</sup> Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 149-154.

<sup>65</sup> A sketch of this map can be found in the Deventer City Archives, see: Johannes van Walbeeck, "Sketch of Curaçao," 1634, SD, West India Company Archives: inv. nr. 0703.71. A reproduction can be found in Hartog, *Curaçao*, 64. A more detailed key to this map can be found in J. H. J Hamelberg, *Documenten behorende bij "De Nederlanders op de West-Indische eilanden,"* Volume 1: Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1901), 25-27. A colored copy of a 1640s reproduction of this map by Claes Jansz. Visser (c. 1640) can be found in Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 91.

<sup>66</sup> Visser's map was included in Willem Blaeu's *Tweede deel van 't Tooneel des aerdriex*, see: Wim Klooster, *The Dutch In the Americas 1600-1800: A Narrative History With The Catalogue Of An Exhibition Of Rare Prints, Maps, And Illustrated Books From The John Carter Brown Library* (Providence, Rhode Island: John Carter Brown Library, 1997).

water, no mention is made of potential gardens, farms, or plantation sites. The reasons for Van Walbeeck's and later Blaeu's inclusion or omission of these details is impossible to ascertain. However, one might discern from the map a few ideas pertaining to Dutch plans for provisioning the island's inhabitants. As long as the Company sent a steady supply of provisions, the "many and overflowing" livestock together with the few sources of "clean" water would suffice to sustain the island's Company population.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately for Company employees located on the island, the Company failed to send the promised provisions. A lack of support during the Company's crucial early years on the island left Van Walbeeck in a precarious position. He soon found himself faced with mounting resistance from both the Caquetios and Company employees.

Company employees were the first to push back. In June of 1635, Company soldiers who were employed to defend the island found themselves instead building barracks, pushing wheelbarrows of salt, and hauling pails of water without adequate food provisions. To make matters worse, several weeks earlier Van Walbeeck and his advisors reduced soldiers' daily bread ration due to declining supplies and denied their requests for increased wages. For unknown reasons, the *Heren XIX* had failed to send a resupply ship to Curaçao since it was first taken over a year earlier. Malnourished, overworked, and underpaid, the soldiers lay down their guns and shovels and refused to work.

The first instance of Dutch leader's acquiescence to the Caquetios emerged during this stressful strike. In the throes of the soldiers' disobedience, Van Walbeeck issued a decree providing the Caquetios protection and fair treatment from the Company's soldiers. The timing of these two events appears more than coincidental. Based on a similar situation that occurred in 1643 (discussed later), it might be concluded that Dutch soldiers had taken to robbing the

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<sup>67</sup> Quotes taken from the map's insert, see: Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 91.

Caquetios' gardens to supplement their meager rations. Van Walbeeck, attuned to the necessity of maintaining the Caquetios as military allies and cattle herders, chose to ensure a continued alliance by protecting the remaining indigenous population. Whatever his purpose, the strike was short lived. A few days after Van Walbeeck had issued his edict, two supply ships arrived carrying food provisions. Another provisioning ship arrived a month later.<sup>68</sup>

Efforts by the Company to retain the Caquetios' assistance in wrangling cattle illuminates the reason for Van Walbeeck's willingness to negotiate with the Caquetios. In late November 1635, Company leaders on Curaçao decided unanimously to allow Balzathar, the so-called "Captain of the Indians," to leave the Company's service. Allowing Balzathar's departure seems strange since he had acted as a willing and able informant. They explained their reasoning for "liberating" Balzathar by saying that they needed his help in convincing his people to herd the island's wild livestock.<sup>69</sup> Still a month later the need for Caquetios cattle herders appears to have grown, most likely due to daily declining food provisions. The Dutch attempted to incentivize the Caquetios by offering all Indians who served as livestock herders "a goodly lot of clothes, shirts, and shoes."<sup>70</sup> The Company, while perhaps believing they received the better end of this deal, unknowingly tipped their hat. The Caquetios were quickly learning how much the Company relied upon their assistance. They would soon leverage this dependency for their own gains.

The Caquetios became empowered to resist the Company's control once they comprehend their importance to the Company's success and livelihood. They resisted though violent and non-

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<sup>68</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 73-74.

<sup>69</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," November 30, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>70</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," December 19, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

violent acts. The nature of these acts took many forms as the Caquetios adapted to the changing geo-political power struggle for the island. Typically, their efforts materialized in either brazen efforts to aid the Spanish in retaking the island or secretive attempts to abscond from the island in acts of desertion. Dutch dependency on the Caquetios is visible in the Company's responses to these acts of resistance: acquiescence and forgiveness.

The attempted escape of several Caquetios further illustrates Dutch dependency and forgiveness of the Caquetios. On the rainy evening of January 14, 1635, three Indians absconded to the island's interior with their wives and children, in all totaling sixteen people.<sup>71</sup> Shortly after, Company leaders ordered a cavalry party to pursue, capture, and return them to the main Dutch encampment. Near-daily downpours thwarted the efforts of additional search parties after the first attempt proved unsuccessful in locating the runaway Natives. A week passed. Still unsuccessful, the Dutch changed tactics and sent some Caquetio women after the party with promises of pardon. Surely, the Dutch leaders thought, pardon and the incursion of lost wages would be enough to incentivize the fugitives to return. They were wrong.

A general feeling of optimism amongst Dutch leaders quickly waned during the nearly month-long ordeal with the "fugitive" Natives. On January 20, 1635, just a few days after the Natives fled, a Dutch official recorded optimistically that through recent storms "the greening of the land might continue."<sup>72</sup> But not a week later the mood had drastically changed. A solid week of dry weather following the Caquetios' escape halted the greening of the island and speculation of an intense drought began. The Council reported that the dry season came earlier and had lasted

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<sup>71</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," January 15, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>72</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," January 20, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

one to two months longer than the year before.<sup>73</sup> Company leaders became increasingly eager to find the Caquetios and return them to service.

The dry weather allowed search efforts to resume in full. On January 30, David Wiltshut, Commander of the Dutch forces on Curaçao, rode out into the interior to retrieve the Natives stating that he desired to return the Natives so as to “continue the consumption of the fruit and beasts” found on the island. Wiltshut along with several horsemen quickly succeeded in locating one Indian who, after being interrogated, informed the Dutch of the other runaways’ location. The captured and interrogated Native then led a small group of Dutch horsemen directly to a cliff where they found the remaining Natives.<sup>74</sup> The next day, the Dutch patrol seized the fleeing Natives and returned them to the newly established fort of Wiltshutsburg to receive their punishment.

Johannes Van Walbeeck weighed his options as he faced the difficult question of what to do with a group of attempted runaway Natives. The traditional punishment for a runaway soldier was death, but Van Walbeeck understood the Netherlander’s dependency on the Caquetios and wanted to ensure continued good relations with the Caquetios. As a result, he and his Council pardoned all of the Natives. The Council provided several reasons to justify their decision. First, the Natives appeared to be of a peaceful nature. Second, the runaways ensured the Dutch that they had no intention of leaving the island. Finally, and the “most important reason of all,” was that the Dutch troops were so occupied working on the construction of fortifications that they

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<sup>73</sup> “Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten,” January 27, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>74</sup> “Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten,” January 30, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

had no time to learn how to round up livestock.<sup>75</sup> Dutch leaders were firmly beholden to the Caquetios livestock wranglers to survive the impending dry season.

The Company clearly relied upon the Caquetios as cattle herders and they might have also relied upon them as agriculturalists. After Jan Claeszoon van Campen, Laurens Pietersz, and Pietersz's farm hands traded in their shovels for weapons sometime during the summer of 1635, no mention is made of attempts to grow subsistence crops, although Van Walbeeck did express interest in growing cash crops like tobacco on several occasions.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, several gardens appear to have been tended near Dutch fortifications. These gardens were most likely tended by the Caquetios. Garden work would probably be below Company commanders and soldiers had already been overworked to the point of striking. The only farmers on the island had quickly abandoned agricultural pursuits and enlisted as soldiers, while no European women lived on Curaçao until around 1638.<sup>77</sup> This left only the remaining Caquetios. Indeed, two Caquetio later testified that they aided the Company by helping them grow vegetables.<sup>78</sup> Johannes van Walbeeck also frequently mentioned the Caquetios' agricultural skills.<sup>79</sup> One of these Company gardens, named after Commander Wiltschut, became the object of considerable attention following yet another soldiers' strike.

By February 1636, the supplies provided by the three provisioning ships that ended the previous soldiers' strike in June of 1635 had begun to run low. In response to decreased

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<sup>75</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," February 4, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>76</sup> "Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten," March 3, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>77</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Wim Klooster, *The Dutch Moment: War, Trade, and Settlement in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2016), 239.

<sup>79</sup> "Letter from Johannes van Walbeeck to Zeeland Chamber, March 24, 1636, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv.nr. 51.31.

provisions, Company soldiers abandoned their work yet again in mid-February. Within three days, Company leaders had reached an accord with the “mutinous” soldiers and put an indefinite end to construction projects and the strike. However, the crucial problem of subsistence provisions remained unsolved. Several increasingly desperate soldiers took actions into their own hands. During the night of March 1, several soldiers commandeered a few horses, trampled about the island, and robbed fruit from an unidentified garden.<sup>80</sup> A few nights later a similar incident occurred. According to a report by the quartermaster, several soldiers pillaged Wiltschut’s garden and stole everything they could carry.<sup>81</sup> These actions were both attempts to satiate hunger and provoke Dutch leaders into providing better provisions.

In response to the robberies Director Van Walbeeck acted to protect the remaining garden sites. Between March 7 and 10, Van Walbeeck sent several Company troops to protect a large garden near Santa Barbara Bay that contained orange, lemon, and pomegranate trees. Next, Van Walbeeck issued an edict that no soldier be allowed outside the Quarter without prior consent and instituted a punishment of death for any soldier caught stealing from any garden.<sup>82</sup> This policy seems to have squashed future robbery attempts from Company gardens until 1641 when Peter Stuyvesant would be forced to issue a similar edict under severe drought conditions. The lengths to which Van Walbeeck went to protect the Company’s gardens from theft indicates their greater importance to the Company’s success on Curaçao.

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<sup>80</sup> “Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten,” February 2, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>81</sup> “Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten,” February 7, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

<sup>82</sup> “Journal of the Director and Council of Curaçao, J. van Walbeeck, David Adam Wildschut, Jan Claesen, W. Spendlone, Johan van Groenenborch and Pieter van Houten,” February 10, 1635, NA, OWIC, 1.05.01.01, inv. nr. 50.22.

Caquetio threats of fleeing the island or refusing to work for the Company were perhaps less daunting than the potential that the Caquetios might choose to collude with the Spanish against the Dutch. The Caquetios' allegiances to any single European power were not universally shared amongst members on the island. Various factions alternatively favored the Spanish, the Dutch, and/or switched allegiances for reasons advantageous to their own well-being. During the Company's early settlement of Curaçao, most Caquetios favored the passive Spanish and sought out opportunities to aid them, though their attempts never fully materialized. By the 1640s, with the Dutch precariously weakened by the onset of extreme dry weather, the Caquetios returned to the play-off system. In acts of violent and non-violent resistance, they threatened Dutch leaders that if their demands for greater freedom were not met they would once again aid the Spanish.

Attempts by indigenous peoples to work with the Spanish to oust the Company began with Caquetios aid to De Morla in August of 1634. They continued their efforts, though, even after the Company had secured the island. Many times the Spanish provoked Caquetios' resistance while at other times the Caquetios initiated actions themselves. One of the earliest "conspiratorial" acts involved a cadre of Caquetios who Van Walbeeck had earlier sent to Coro. These "sensible and keen-witted Indians," now under the command of the Spanish commander Nuñez Melian, plotted to sail to Curaçao and poison the island's few drinking wells. Stormy weather, however, foiled their plan and the boat never returned. Months later Melian sent a second expedition, this time led by Domingo Antonio, to capture a Dutchman. Antonio's expedition, unlike the first, reached the island but failed to capture anyone. Antonio did, however, convince a group of Caquetios to return with him who provided detailed information to Melian about the Company's situation. In June 1635, one of the biggest blows to befall Van Walbeeck came when one of his indigenous



confidants, Juan Martin, colluded with the Spanish.<sup>83</sup> For the Dutch these would be the first in a long and stuttered series of Caquetio attempts to return passive Spanish agents to Curaçao.

Native alliances remained pragmatic if not capricious. In November 1635, a group of Netherlanders patrolling the island came across an abandoned canoe at Westpunt (Westpoint). They immediately set fire to the rather large vessel to prevent the vessel's owners from escaping. A pursuit in search of the owners recovered a very old Native by the name of Juan Mestizo who claimed that he along with his brother and one other Native had been sent to Curaçao to carry of Indian *vaqueros* (cattle herders). While the Dutch never tracked down the two other Caquetios, they did manage to convince Mestizo to enter into their service as an informant. He did so without much hesitation and provided detailed information pertaining to Curaçao's Spanish occupation.<sup>84</sup>

The period between 1634 and 1636 laid the groundwork for the events that took place between 1641 and 1644 when severe drought conditions descended on the island. While the Caquetios proved helpful informants, livestock herders, and potentially agriculturalists, they could just as easily turn on the Dutch through acts of resistance. Dutch leaders on the island including Johannes Van Walbeeck, David Wiltshut, and later Peter Stuyvesant understood the Company's deep dependency on indigenous allies. They issued edicts and instituted policies to ensure indigenous cooperation and service. In doing so, however, they showed their weaknesses and empowered the Caquetios.

Few extent documents exist for the period between the tenure of Johannes Van Walbeeck (1634-1638) and that of Peter Stuyvesant (1642-1644). However, the dynamic between Company employees and the indigenous peoples of Curaçao appear to have undergone significant changes

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<sup>83</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 66-67.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

during this period. A 1643 report calculated that the collective indigenous population on Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao had doubled.<sup>85</sup> The inclusion of Aruba and Bonaire in this total, though, is indicative of a larger change. The Dutch had by now extended their relationship with indigenous peoples to include those living on Curaçao's neighboring islands who were "relatives" of the Caquetios remaining on Curaçao.<sup>86</sup> The exact relationship of the indigenous population on Aruba to those on Curaçao is complicated by the early sixteenth-century Spanish slave raids of the islands and the gradual re-population of Aruba. Scholars have suggested that by the 1640s the indigenous population on Aruba consisted of refugees from the mainland, escapees from various Antilles islands, and returned descendants of the Caquetios shipped to Hispaniola in 1515. Nevertheless, going forward the indigenous populations on all three islands worked together in acts of resistance. Secondly, the Company had begun incorporating African slave labor into their work force on the island. The Netherlands' transition to a new labor source proved problematic to the Caquetios who watched their importance to Dutch success slowly give way to a new, less independent source of labor.

Drought-induced famine conditions overtook the island as early as 1641. In October, Curaçao's director Jan Clasen van Campen wrote to New Netherland "earnestly requesting" provision. Van Campen argued that the island was "very much in need of them and can no longer send their ships out to sea for lack of provisions." The New Netherland Council agreed to find the "most profitable way" to send provision to Curaçao, but nothing ever came of their decision.<sup>87</sup> Similar drought conditions continued into 1642. In response, Stuyvesant worked to quell riotous soldiers troubled by a looming famine and acted to stop any additional

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<sup>85</sup> "Resolution," March 31, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 22.

<sup>86</sup> "Resolution," August 10, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 27-28.

<sup>87</sup> "Council Minutes," November 14, 1641, *New York Historical Manuscripts IV*, 127.

“insubordination and mutiny among the soldiers.”<sup>88</sup> Because of the lack of supplies from both the Netherlands and New Netherland, Stuyvesant worked to reduce the Company’s personnel on Curaçao to the bare minimum necessary for defense and operations. The contracted time of an untold number of soldiers had expired in 1642 and many now sought to escape the hardships of another imminent famine by returning to the Netherlands. Finding it “advisable for the maximum service to the Company, peace, [and] unity,” Stuyvesant and his Council granted the “veteran soldiers deliverance” by allowing them to depart Curaçao onboard several ships traveling from Brazil to the Netherlands.<sup>89</sup> Along with the soldiers, Stuyvesant sent word of the immediate need for provisions alluding to a recent attack by the Spanish on Bonaire and its consequential losses to Company profits. The underlying message: send additional support or risk losing even more profits.<sup>90</sup>

The year 1643 proved a turning point for all parties with a vested interest in Curaçao. Spanish attacks ramped up, Dutch subsistence supplies reached untenably low levels, Director Stuyvesant called upon Caquetios and enslaved Africans for assistance, and the Caquetios staged one of their last resistance movements before being almost completely replaced by enslaved Africans. All of this occurred amidst one of the worst droughts of the era.

Stuyvesant knew that he could not rely solely on support from the fatherland and issued several orders to counteract the brunt of another famine. On March 13, believing New Netherland to be better supplied than Curaçao, he dispatched one of four Company yachts to New Netherland for food.<sup>91</sup> Then in April, he sent a smaller sloop to the islands of Aves and

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<sup>88</sup> “Resolution,” March 18, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 19

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> “Resolution,” March 20, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 20.

<sup>91</sup> “Resolution,” March 13, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 18.

Rocas, located east of Bonaire, “to catch some turtles, if possible, for the Negroes.”<sup>92</sup> He altered his plan a month later when conditions on the island further deteriorated. He ordered sixteen additional soldiers to join the hunt for turtles that he believed could provide “for the maintenance of the Negroes...as well as for the rationing out of [their] own food supply.”<sup>93</sup> Weighing his decision, Stuyvesant concluded that while fewer soldiers on the island made it more vulnerable to attack, it was more important to make Curaçao’s “meager food supply last longer.”<sup>94</sup>

Constant fear of a renewed Spanish assault on Curaçao exacerbated drought-induced anxieties amongst the Dutch. As early as 1642, the Spanish had made inroads on Curaçao’s neighboring islands of Bonaire and Aruba.<sup>95</sup> Sometime before 1643, the Spanish had pillaged Bonaire, destroyed the Netherlands’ salt operation supplies, completely destroyed all Dutch fortifications, and rendered the island, according to Stuyvesant, “useless and of no service.”<sup>96</sup>

By March 1643, Spanish attacks had become so frequent and severe that Stuyvesant alerted the *Heren XIX* of the threat. In their missive to the *Heren XIX*, Company leaders lamented the loss of Bonaire’s productive capacity and additionally laid bare the island’s increasingly disastrous drought-induced famine conditions. They pleaded for immediate food provisions either from the Dutch Republic or from New Netherland and stressed that the island’s utter lack of food had led to “insubordination and mutiny among the soldiers.”<sup>97</sup>

The Dutch Republic’s failure to respond to Curaçao’s pleas for help forced Stuyvesant into a difficult position. With ever decreasing food supplies, Stuyvesant decided to follow Van Walbeeck’s example and turned to the Caquetios and burgeoning population of enslaved Africans

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<sup>92</sup> “Resolution,” April 14, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 23.

<sup>93</sup> “Resolution,” May 19, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 24.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 69-70.

<sup>96</sup> “Resolution,” March 13, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 19.

for help. He deployed two measures to ensure the Caquetios' cordiality and assistance. The first measure restrained Company personnel from plundering Native gardens. Stuyvesant received numerous complaints from the Caquetios during the early months of 1643 that Company soldiers, hungry due to low food rations, had "robbed their abandoned gardens of fruit...and destroyed the fruit trees."<sup>98</sup> Coming in the middle of a prolonged famine it is likely that the soldiers did not simply destroy the fruit trees but rather stole the remaining fruit for personal consumption. Regardless, Stuyvesant issued an order carrying the death penalty for any Company employee found plundering Native gardens.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, Stuyvesant declared that any Company employee desirous of remaining on Curaçao after their terms of service expired could do so by establishing themselves on any land, "provided that they do not select any gardens presently cultivated by the Indians or the Company's employed blacks."<sup>100</sup> Stuyvesant understood that support from the local Caquetios was essential. Their ability to supply hungry Dutch soldiers required that he maintain cordial relations to ensure he could turn to them during times of intense need.

Despite Stuyvesant's efforts, the Company's food supply had dwindled to no "more than 4 to 5 weeks" of provisions by June 1643.<sup>101</sup> Making matters worse, the Dutch received reports of Spanish intentions to attack Curaçao as early as May, just as Stuyvesant was deciding how best to distribute his troops. The drought-induced subsistence crisis lay foremost in Stuyvesant's mind as he weighed his options on how best to bring relief to hungry, riotous soldiers. Initially, he hoped to send additional troops to the nearby islands of Rocas and Aves to scour for additional food, but rethought his decision after learning that "24 ships have been assembled at the island of

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<sup>98</sup> "Resolution," February 26, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 10.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> "Freedoms and Exemptions granted to the Company's servants," March 10, 1643, 12.

<sup>101</sup> "Resolution," June 16, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 25.

St. Martin,” which he feared were “planning one or another attack from there.”<sup>102</sup> The threat of a potential famine-induced riot prevailed and Stuyvesant agreed to send a sloop of soldiers to search out new food sources.

In the meantime, however, a Company patrol had captured an untold number of Spanish soldiers on Bonaire that had been sent to spy on the island. Stuyvesant and his council weighed several options as to what to do with the captured Spanish spies. Custom would have the Dutch imprison the troops until they could be used to gain an additional advantage, but “the food supply would hardly allow them” to be kept on the island. On the other hand, he feared that if he returned the spies, they would inform the Spanish of the Company’s dire situation on the island and prompt an attack.<sup>103</sup> Weak, undernourished, and with several troops spread across nearby islands searching for food, Stuyvesant knew he could not hold off a full-out Spanish attack. As a result, he retained the spies and while it is unclear exactly when the Spanish were finally dealt with, they were still on the island as late as December of 1643.<sup>104</sup> To feed an ever growing population, the Company became even more reliant upon indigenous peoples for life sustaining food.

On August 20, 1643, Stuyvesant drew up a set of orders to secure Indian support. Under the pretext of intelligence gathering, Stuyvesant dispatched a ship to Aruba in order “to maintain good intelligence with the Indians...[and] find out about the condition of the island and the Natives.”<sup>105</sup> The severe drought and impending famine on Curaçao, however, suggests Stuyvesant’s secondary motivation might have been more pressing. “In addition there are some Indians from there living on this island, who still have some children and wives there, and others

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<sup>102</sup> “Resolution,” May 19, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 23-24.

<sup>103</sup> “Resolution,” August 10, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 26-27.

<sup>104</sup> “Resolution,” December 5, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 31.

<sup>105</sup> “Resolution,” August 20, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 27.

have some livestock such as male and female goats and sheep.”<sup>106</sup> As early as 1641, the Caquetios of Curaçao had demanded their families be transferred to Curaçao in order to be reunited with them and to ensure their safety in light of increasing Spanish attacks on Aruba. While Stuyvesant found the transfer of the Caquetios and their cattle “not only advisable but also necessary and beneficial for this island...in order to be of service to us in time of need,” he initially delayed the final decision to do so.<sup>107</sup> It was only after the drought had set in by August of 1643 that Stuyvesant began to see the additional population, but perhaps more tellingly their cattle, as “a benefit to this island.”<sup>108</sup> He then granted the Native request that their families and livestock be transported to Curaçao.

The Caquetios’ acts of resistance might have played an equally important role in securing the transfer of their families back to Curaçao. At the end of March 1643, Stuyvesant and his Council learned that Natives on Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire had begun riding “into the countryside” against the Company’s orders. Additionally, when Company leaders sent Natives into the interior on official business they took “too much time” before they returned, “playing among themselves at riding the horse and ruining the animals.”<sup>109</sup> While knowing the Caquetios’ exact intentions is impossible, they may have used non-violent measures of foot-dragging and non-compliance in an attempt to force Dutch commanders to give in to their demands. In responses to these acts of resistance, Stuyvesant ordered the Caquetios to return and delegated a Company official to oversee the Natives by daily riding into the interior to “keep watch” over them.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> “Resolution,” January 6, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 9.

<sup>108</sup> “Resolutions,” August 20, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 27-28.

<sup>109</sup> “Resolution,” March 31, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 22.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Conditions on Curaçao continued to deteriorate throughout the remainder of 1643. By September, the storehouses contained “bread, stockfish, and oil,” that the quartermaster estimated would not “last us more than two to three weeks at best” and “beans, vinegar, and meat for two months at most.”<sup>111</sup> Near mid-October, the storehouses lay in a “grave state...with no more than two rations of beans, vinegar, and fish” and the drought had killed a significant portion of the island’s livestock. As a result, it was impossible for the Dutch to “maintain the garrison solely with meat.”<sup>112</sup> Brief relief came when three ships arrived sometime between October 15 and December 5 carrying enough food for “10 to 12 months at best.”<sup>113</sup>

Curaçao’s socio-political dynamics changed remarkably during the drought. In 1641, the *Heren XIX* declared Curaçao a collection point for slaves captured from enemy vessels.<sup>114</sup> The island’s African slave population subsequently increased as did the Company’s need to find subsistence with which to feed them. In June of 1643, the Company’s daily dwindling food supplies prompted officials to recall the “Negroes who are still on the island of Bonnaïro” in order to “employ them here [Curaçao] in the gardens and in other Company service.”<sup>115</sup> By August 1643, the enslaved Africans were “busy preparing gardens in the countryside.”<sup>116</sup> No longer would the Company have to rely solely upon the indigenous population; they had found instead a new, more reliant and pliant source of labor in African slaves.

Newly-filled storehouses, however, did not allow Stuyvesant to let his guard down for long. In January 1644, he decided to launch an attack on the nearby Spanish-held island of St. Martin. Stuyvesant’s reasons for attacking the island were two-fold. He desired access to the

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<sup>111</sup> “Resolution,” September 7, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 29.

<sup>112</sup> “Resolution,” October 15, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 30.

<sup>113</sup> “Resolution,” December 5, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 31.

<sup>114</sup> Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 27.

<sup>115</sup> “Resolution,” June 16, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 25.

<sup>116</sup> “Resolutions,” August 20, 1643, *Curaçao Papers*, 28.



island's salt pans, which he believed "more accessible than any other in this region" and thus made the island a preferred trading destination. But perhaps more importantly, he wanted to prevent the English or French from taking the island and believed that if such an event occurred "the Company would suffer considerable damage from the duties and claims" lost as a result.<sup>117</sup> The attack which took place between March 22 and April 16 ultimately proved disastrous.<sup>118</sup> While casualties on both sides were nominal, a Spanish shot hit Stuyvesant's right leg. The damage to his leg required an immediate amputation. This temporarily ended Stuyvesant's command over Curaçao and gave him the sobriquet "peg-leg Stuyvesant." Following the amputation he returned to the Dutch Republic to recover. Back in the Republic he did not remain silent. During his recovery he petitioned the *Heren XIX* heavily to consolidate Dutch efforts in the West Indies under a single directorship – a position for which he was uniquely qualified and received in 1647.

Before returning to the Republic to heal, however, Stuyvesant presided over one final crisis. Over the first few days of April, 450 denizens of the Dutch West India Company under the command of David Wiltschut unexpectedly landed on Curaçao from Maranhão. Stuyvesant worried the newly arrived soldiers would continue to diminish Curaçao's own precarious food supply. Stuyvesant ultimately ordered the soldiers to New Netherland where they could "perform some service there against the Indians."<sup>119</sup> "The soldiers," declared a May 26, 1644 resolution, "can be used against the rebelling Indians in New Netherland."<sup>120</sup> New Netherland, just like

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<sup>117</sup> "Resolution," January 14, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 34.

<sup>118</sup> The Dutch later acquired the island as part of the Peace of Münster/Westphalia that brought an end to the Dutch Revolt in 1648, see: Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast*, 136-137.

<sup>119</sup> "Resolutions," May 20, 21, & 25, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 38.

<sup>120</sup> "Resolution," May 26, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 41.

Brazil and Curaçao, was experiencing its own indigenous resistance known alternatively as the Wappinger War or Kieft's War (1643-1645).

By the time the worst of the drought had passed, Dutch dependency on indigenous peoples had given way to a new dependency on the forced capture, shipment, and enslavement of African peoples.<sup>121</sup> This is itself a reflection of Curaçao's changing purpose. No longer viable as a source of salt or place of permanent Dutch settlement, Curaçao became a slave-trading port.<sup>122</sup>

Following the end of the drought, Stuyvesant wrote the Amsterdam Chamber while recovering from his amputation to petition that "Curaçao should be employed for the benefit of the slave trade."<sup>123</sup> By the 1650s, Curaçao had indeed become the center for the Dutch Atlantic slave trade.<sup>124</sup> Indigenous peoples, however, did not vanish. Instead, the Caribbean world's indigenous peoples became enmeshed in the burgeoning Dutch slave trade – acting as lesser-known characters in the larger story of African slavery.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> The *fluyt De Melckmeyt*, which had originally been sent to Maranhão but arrived only to find that Wiltschut and his men had abandoned the fort, changed course to Curaçao and arrived to the island sometime in May 1644. Its arrival brought much needed relief to the drought-induced famine conditions on Curaçao. The ships included food supplies for eight to nine months – enough to get the Dutch through the waning months of the three-year drought, see: "Resolution," June 6, 1644, *Curaçao Papers*, 42.

<sup>122</sup> For more on Curaçao's role in the Dutch Atlantic slave trade, see: Wim Klooster, "Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003), 203-206; Han Jordaán, "The Curaçao Slave Market: From Asiento Trade to Free Trade, 1700-1730," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, ed. Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (Leiden & London: BRILL, 2003), 219-57; and Han Jordaán, *Slavernij En Vrijheid Op Curaçao: De Dynamiek van Een Achttiende-Eeuwse Atlantisch Handelsknooppunt* (Zutphen, the Netherlands: Walburg Press, 2013).

<sup>123</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 91.

<sup>124</sup> Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 27.

<sup>125</sup> "Inventory of slave ship *America*," June 7, 1673, ZA, Zeeland Archives from Suriname and Surrounding Regions, inv. nr. 2035.242. For an examination of the creolization of Curaçao's society, see: Linda M. Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

## 9. Aftermath

The Dutch West India eventually ceded Brazil and New Netherland to its European competitors, but Curaçao remained firmly in the Company's control. Today, Curaçao is still considered a constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – though it gained full autonomy in 2010 with the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles. In the aftermath of the Caquetios' resistance movement and the three-year drought that plagued the island's Dutch colonists, the Dutch West India Company worked to transform the island into a strategic port in the growing trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>126</sup> The signing of the Peace of Munster in 1648 marked a significant turning point for the now independent Dutch Republic and its colonies, including Curaçao. The Peace Treaty that ended the Dutch Revolt against Spain meant the Republic no longer required Curaçao as a naval base and instead could unleash the island's economic potential.

The role of Curaçao in the trans-Atlantic slave trade was solidified in 1662 when the Spanish reinstated the *asiento de negros* and the Dutch received a subcontract to transport African slaves across the Atlantic. The *asiento* was a monopoly contract granted to a prominent individual in exchange for a fee paid to the Spanish royal government that allowed individuals to “sell licenses entitling the holder to bring slaves into the Spanish colonies according to specific contract.”<sup>127</sup> The *asiento* was occasionally suspended and during these periods transactions were conducted via the sale of individual licenses, although the sale of slaves at any time was also conducted illegally through smuggling and illicit trade. Historian Johannes Postma has divided the *asiento* system into three periods. Before 1640, the Portuguese controlled the trade and after 1713 the English controlled the trade. During the interim, the trade was divided between various

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<sup>126</sup> Curaçao's importance as a naval base diminished in 1648 with the signing of the Peace of Munster which brought an end to the Dutch Revolt.

<sup>127</sup> This definition is drawn from Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 30.

competitive European traders including the Dutch. And, it was during this period that Curaçao emerged as a strategic trade port. Prior to the reinstatement of the *asiento* in 1662, the Dutch involved themselves in the slave trade mostly by intercepting and capturing Portuguese slaving vessel and through smuggling operations between Curaçao and the Spanish Main.

As Curaçao's role in the slave trade increased, the value the Company placed on the Caquetios and the relative importance of the Caquetios to the Company diminished. In 1655, Peter Stuyvesant sent instructions from New Netherland that reiterated his earlier orders forbidding Company servants from destroying, despoiling, or robbing the Natives' gardens or treating them unfairly or fraudulently.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, Stuyvesant insisted that Curaçao's indigenous peoples were distinct from enslaved Africans, despite the similarity in the services they rendered. He instructed the vice-director of Curaçao, his friend Matthias Beck, that "he shall not treat the natives of the island severely as slaves or in an unchristianlike manner, but through appropriate persuasion and promises encourage them to perform service, particularly in cutting dyewod, transporting bundles of branches..., driving the horses, maintaining and cleaning the wells, and other ordinary services conformable to what they have been accustomed to do."<sup>129</sup> Throughout the 1650s, Natives continued to perform various services for the Company. They carried water, slaughtered cattle, and worked alongside African slaves cutting dyewood and constructing gantries to be used in what remained of the Company's salt operations on the island.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> "Copy of Instructions left on Curaçao from Peter Stuyvesant," June 8, 1655, *Curaçao Papers*, 76.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>130</sup> "Letter from L. Rodenburch to Heren XIX," April 2, 1654, *Curaçao Papers*, 62. For water and cattle, see: Hartog, *Curaçao*, 129. In 1828, the *Curaçaosche Courant* reported the last "pureblood Indian" living on Curaçao passed away in 1788, see: Hartog, *Curaçao*, 129. However, the continued presence of a strong mestizo population increasingly came to prevail on the island and is recognizable today in the use of Papiamentu as one of the island's two recognized languages.

In 1657, Matthias Beck, in a passing reference to the island's earlier Spanish period, wrote that "the Indians, who were then here in numbers, supported themselves with the cattle, just as the few do who are now still with us here." Beck's primary concern in referencing the diminished Native population was with what appeared to be yet another "lean period" on the island.<sup>131</sup> Two years earlier, hopes of the island's latent agricultural potential abounded. More land than ever before had been cultivated and freemen and Company servants alike believed that "if the Lord God is please to grant His blessing and the rains continue just as they began early in the month of November, then we shall have no scarcity of grain or beans." Yet, they feared that "if the rain ceases early...then we apprehend that the produce, which is presently green and beautiful, shall never fully ripen. Therefore everything depends solely on the mercy and blessing of the Lord."<sup>132</sup> Their fears became a reality the following year. The rains ceased and the Company's magazine returned to a "sober state." While the Company waited for relief from *patria* or New Netherland, the Company's "Negroes and many others living in the countryside" who depended on the island's own productivity "in order to live," were left hungry due to the "poor growth and because the fruits of the country were not very successful here on the island this year."<sup>133</sup>

Matthias Beck summarized the state of Curaçao's agriculture potential and the necessity of Company leaders to rethink their purposes for the island in 1657.

Concerning the advancement and promotion of agriculture: Every attempt is being made for as much as we have the opportunity and means to do so; however, whoever is informing your honors that in these warm lands considerable produce can be grown during dry years by planting the same near places and spots where there are wells so that they can be watered or otherwise made wet from them when rain is scarce, is giving your honors very bad information and is demonstrating that he has little knowledge of what is required for the complete growth of produce in these warm lands, because it is impossible for crops to reach perfection in this country without rain from above. It is true that in marshy grounds, which are not to be found at all on Curaçao but which I have seen planted in Brasil, that they yielded produce during the dry

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<sup>131</sup> "Letter from Mathias Beck to Heren XIX," June 11, 1657, *Curaçao Papers*, 102.

<sup>132</sup> "Letter from Mathias Beck to Heren XIX," December 24, 1655, *Curaçao Papers*, 85.

<sup>133</sup> "Notes from Council Meeting," February 23, 1656, *Curaçao Papers*, 93.

or summer season; however, on dry ground which is common here on Curaçao, no produce, which can be of any consideration for helping the garrison here, can be obtained without rains.<sup>134</sup>

When the *asiento* trade began to pickup after 1662, the Company, despite Beck's warning, encouraged the cultivation of new plantations in order to decrease its reliance on imports from abroad. Eight or nine estates were established to grow maize for the island's slaves. However, none were ever very successful. The Company continued to rely upon imported subsistence goods and in 1704, Jacob Beck, the newly appointed director on the island, suggested the plantations be sold off. Three years later he succeeded in selling at least five of them.<sup>135</sup>

The future success of Curaçao required the constant support of the Company. It would take more than dyewood and salt, however, to cover such expense. The 1662 *asiento*, together with the continuation of smuggling operations with the Spanish-American mainland, provided the necessary impetus and potential profits for the Company to continue their investment.

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<sup>134</sup> "Letter from Mathias Beck to Heren XIX," June 11, 1657, *Curaçao Papers*, 104.

<sup>135</sup> Hartog, *Curaçao*, 100, 143.

## Part IV: New Netherland, 1621-1664

“We have already stated that the cause of the population of New Netherland was the liberty to trade with the Indians. We shall now prove that it also is the cause of its ruin...”

- Anonymous, Journal of New Netherland, 1647<sup>1</sup>

“Whereas the Company has to bear heavy expenses both for the erection of fortification and the maintenance of soldiers and sailors, Therefore we have resolved to levy some contributions either in peltries, maize or wampum from the Indians residing hereabout, whom we have hitherto protected against their enemies and if there be any tribe, who will not willingly consent to contribute, we shall endeavor to induce them do to so by the most suitable means.” - Resolution to Exact a Tribute from the Indians, September 15, 1639<sup>2</sup>



View of New Amsterdam. Johannes Vingboons, 1665.

National Archives of the Netherlands, The Hague

Foreign Map Collection 4.VELH: inv. nr. 619.14

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<sup>1</sup> “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647 in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), 273.

<sup>2</sup> *DRCHNY* XIII, 6

## 10. An Introduction to New Netherland

The colony of New Netherland stood in sharp contrast to the Company's endeavors elsewhere in the Atlantic. In North America, the Company attempted to fulfill the premise of Article Two of the 1621 charter: to "promote the settlement of fertile and uninhabited districts." Willem Usselinx had long advocated for the establishment of an agricultural colony and identified the Hudson Valley as a prime candidate for agricultural development.<sup>3</sup> To be successful, however, an agricultural settlement necessitated undisputed land and an amenable climate. During the 1630s and 1640s, New Netherland had neither.

Private traders had started trading in New Netherland shortly after Henry Hudson sailed up his namesake river in 1609. The Company's 1621 charter automatically transferred this right to the Company writ-large. Yet, while the Company maintained absolute control over trade, they preferred to transfer the ownership of New Netherland to its original Amsterdam overseers.<sup>4</sup>

New Netherland's primary purpose soon became the subject of heated debate back in the Dutch Republic. A "trade faction" doubted New Netherland's long-term profitability and argued the Company should focus on encouraging private traders that would operate within the Company's monopoly. Private traders, this faction argued, could best exploit the region's rich beaver and otter pelt trade. Such an arrangement would incentivize private traders, limit the Company's long-term expenses, and produce short-term profits. In opposition, pro-settlement critics pointed to the trade faction's myopic vision and how a trade focus would leave the colony vulnerable to Indian and English attacks. This "colonization faction" favored free trade and settlement. They argued that startup expenses would be high, but the Company could recoup

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<sup>3</sup> Usselinx also identified Guyana in South America as another potential agricultural colony, see: *Van Rensselaer Bowier Manuscripts*, 91; Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 80.



these costs and earn a return on their investment over time. Additionally, they argued, this plan would establish New Netherland as an agricultural colony capable of producing enough grain and timber to decrease Dutch dependence on the Baltic trade and even supply Company colonies in the Caribbean and Brazil. Over the course of New Netherland's relatively short existence (1614-1667, 1673-74) both sides won small victories. However, in general, the colony's character slowly transformed from its earlier role as a fur-trading colony to a settlement colony.<sup>5</sup>

The territory of New Netherland stretched from the Delmarva Peninsula (present-day Delaware and eastern shore of Maryland) to as far north as present-day Cape Cod and was pinned in by earlier English colonial claims to the north and south. Three prominent rivers flowed throughout the territory. The *Zuydtrivier* (South River, present-day Delaware River), the *Noort-Rivier* (North River, present-day Hudson River), and the *Varsche rivier* (Fresh River, present-day Connecticut River). The West India Company constructed two defensive forts along the Hudson River that gradually took on the character of trade and commerce centers. Fort Amsterdam, constructed in 1625, lay at the mouth of the Hudson River at the tip of Manhattan and roughly 150 miles north was Fort Orange, constructed in 1624.

Mounting pressure from nearby England's colonies forced New Netherland's gradual transition from a trade to settlement colony. In 1622, the English sent Ambassador Sir Dudley Carlton to The Hague to protest the Company's activities in regions the English claimed based on the right of prior discovery. In response, the States General moved to establish a large population to exert its power in the Hudson Valley and used their seat on the *Heren XIX* to urge the Company to promote colonization. In January 1624, the *Eendracht* departed from the island

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<sup>5</sup> Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 80; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 48; Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 69.

of Texel for New Netherland carrying the colony's first colonists.<sup>6</sup> Six additional ships followed within the year. The settlement campaign came at great expense to the Company as the cost of transportation, provisions, and goods rose to an estimated 100,000 guilders between 1624 to 1625.

The Amsterdam commissioners appointed a colonial director, who was advised by a council of colonists, to ensure the colony's effectiveness, profitability, and agricultural growth. Together, these individuals directed New Netherland's daily affairs including interactions with the region's indigenous groups. New Netherland's directors also dictated where colonists could establish their farms and what crops they would grow. Farmers were then obligated to cultivate the appointed fields for at least six years in order to retain control of them. Additionally, the Company granted farmers freedom to trade on their land but forced them to sell all pelts to the Company at established prices.<sup>7</sup>

The Company's debt obligations for New Netherland continued to rise during the 1620s sparking continuous debates over how best to address the colony's financial ills. It seemed that New Netherland's fur trade simply could not cover the costs of Company-sponsored settlement. The Amsterdam chamber's two warring factions came to an agreement in 1629 to take the cost burden of colonization off the shoulders of the Company. They contrived a patroon-system in which private investors (*patroons*) could establish a private colony (*patroonship*) in New Netherland. Patroons took on several obligations that were aimed at increasing the colony's population. They were financially responsible for promoting and populating the regions entrusted to them and were required to recruit at least fifty individuals above the age of fifteen. In exchange, patroons could choose from any available land in the colony except for Manhattan

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<sup>6</sup> Jaap Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 80.

Island as long as they adequately compensated the indigenous inhabitants. Patroons also received the right to govern their colonies and were granted trading rights in all things except in places where the Company already had an established agent (*commies*). The 1629 agreement also slightly loosened the Company's grip on the fur trade. Colonists and patroon's agents residing in the *patroonships* could trade for furs, though the Company assessed a one-guilder duty on every pelt obtained in this manner. Colonists who risked settlement received a ten-year tax exemption. In the end, only six private investors made an attempt to establish *patroonships* in New Netherland and only one, Killiaen Van Rensselaer, found success.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the earliest known hostilities between New Netherland's colonists and Hudson Valley Natives emanated from land acquisitions following the 1629 Freedoms and Exemptions Act. The patroon-system sparked a wave of expansion overseen by then-director Wouter Van Twiller. Private individuals and Natives generally worked out purchase agreements and then appeared before the colony's administrative council to formalize and finalize the transaction. Extreme weather events compounded disagreements over the meaning of land purchases and led to conflicts with indigenous groups that within three years' time had halted the colony's expansion.

New Netherland's settlement coincided with a pattern of extreme weather. Tree ring samples suggest the Hudson Valley experienced drought conditions between 1627 and 1630 as well as 1635 and 1636.<sup>9</sup> These droughts caused tensions between colonists and Natives as agricultural fields become increasingly important for survival. The absence of detailed records during this early period of Dutch settlement in New Netherland precludes a causative analysis,

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<sup>8</sup> Den Heijer, *Geschiedenis van de WIC*, 80-81; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 48-49.

<sup>9</sup> For drought records, see Neil Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?," 1339-54; "Grid Point 267," Data Set, *North American Drought Atlas*.

but the frequency, level, and range of hostilities that erupted across the colony between settlers and Natives in the early 1630s suggests more than simple correlation.

The earliest land transactions from Native to Dutch hands reflect a tendency to establish settlements in close proximity to New Amsterdam and foreshadowed later colonial conflicts. Wouter Van Twiller, the colony's fifth director, purchased *Noten Eylant* (Nut Island and later Governor's Island) in 1637 for two axe heads, a string of beads, and some iron nails. In the surrounding years, colonists and Company officials purchased lands in present-day Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Jersey City area then known as Pavonia. In 1633, the Raritan attacked Company traders in Pavonia on multiple occasions. The documentary record is silent on the causes of these violent events but perhaps the Raritan had been especially hard hit by drought and in response tried to protect valuable agricultural and hunting grounds. These hostilities came to an end the following year when the Raritan and Company leaders brokered a peace deal. Regardless, the events induced the owner of Pavonia, Michael Pauw, to sell his land back to the Company in 1635.<sup>10</sup>

The bulk of New Netherland's commercial fur trade activity took place at Fort Orange, approximately 150 miles north of New Amsterdam along the Hudson River. The Company initially conducted the majority of its fur trade with the Mahican who resided on the eastern shores of the Hudson River's northern banks and who, in turn, traded with tribes even further north along the St. Lawrence River. The Mahican's access to furs ensured such favorable trade relations with the Dutch that they became military allies on at least one occasion. In 1626, the Mahican convinced the Dutch commissary in Fort Orange to join forces against the Mohawk. Despite the Company's policy of neutrality concerning Indian disputes, Commissary Daniel van

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<sup>10</sup> Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960), 45-46.

Krieckenbeeck's assurance of success convinced him the alliance would be advantageous. His decision had deadly consequences. En route to attack the Mohawk, he along with six colonists and a Mahican war party fell into a Mohawk ambush. Three colonists were killed and three escaped. The Company quickly moved to repair their relationship with the Mohawk. An itinerant trader named Pieter Barentsen negotiated on behalf of the Company and reached a quick settlement with the Mohawk who, having walked away from the assault unscathed, readily accepted the Company's apology. This was a fortuitous resolution. Between 1628 and 1629, the Mohawk dealt the Mahican a devastating blow after several decades of hostilities and as a result, the Mohawk gradually replaced the Mahican as the Company's primary trading partner at Fort Orange.<sup>11</sup>

Fort Orange's trade focus began to shift following the 1629 Freedoms and Exemptions Act. Just as more agricultural communities developed around New Amsterdam and Manhattan Island, so too did farmers begin to arrive and cultivate the area around Fort Orange. Killiaen Van Rensselaer, the only patroon to establish a successful patroonship, purchased lands on either side of the Hudson River near Fort Orange and named the area Rensselaerswyck, although he managed his lands from across the Atlantic and never actually visited the colony. Part of his success owed to his ability to negotiate a deal with the colony's then-director Wouter Van Twiller. Van Twiller happened be Van Rensselaer's nephew and had been appointed in large part through the concerted efforts of his uncle. The deal allowed Rensselaer's tenants to trade cash crops to the Company in exchange for much needed foodstuffs. While this activity surely

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 46-48. For a counterargument to the "Beaver War" interpretation of Iroquois hostilities against the Mahican and French that emphasizes the Iroquois' traditional mourning war practices and territorial defense rather than market economics, see: José Antônio Brandão, *"Your Fyre Shall Burn No More": Iroquois Policy toward New France and Its Native Allies to 1701* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

violated the Company's monopoly, it seemed that no party – private, Native, or Company – found much reason to quarrel over the illicit trade.<sup>12</sup>

Hostilities erupted between the Mohawk and Company employees in Fort Orange in 1633, the same year as similar hostilities occurred near New Amsterdam. The root of the hostilities, based on a 1634 deposition of former New Netherland director Bastiaen Jansz Crol taken in Amsterdam, lay with the appointment of Hans Jorissen Hontom to the position of commissary of Fort Orange in 1633. Hontom, according to the deposition, had at an earlier point kidnapped a Mohawk leader and then killed him despite having received the demanded ransom. Saggodryochta, the head chief of the Mohawk, identified Crol during a trade in 1633 and was so incensed by his presence that he refused to complete the transaction. Soon afterwards, the Mohawk set fire to a Company yacht, threatened to kill Crol if they saw him again, and then killed “all the cattle in the neighborhood of Fort Orange.” Nothing came of the threat on Crol's life as he died in an unrelated incident a few months later.<sup>13</sup>

The Company also expanded their trading presence eastward and between 1632 and 1633 constructed the House of Good Hope – a trading post near Hartford. This area hosted some of the earliest Dutch traders in the Americas and at least one of these traders planted an early seed of distrust between the local Mattabesec tribe and the Dutch. In 1622, an unknown European trader kidnapped and held a Mattabesec leader for ransom. The trader released the leader after receiving payment. While the Company expelled the trader upon hearing news of the transgressions and replaced him with the more diplomatic Pieter Barentsen, the tribe retained animosity towards the Dutch going forward and pulled them into a protracted war with the nearby Pequot and English.

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<sup>12</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 49-50.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

This conflict came to an end in 1635 when the Pequot ceded their land in the area to the English, but erupted once again in 1637 during the infamous Pequot War.<sup>14</sup>

Swanendael, a patroonship founded by Samuel Godyn along the Delaware River in 1629, rounded out New Netherland's major agricultural claims. Approximately thirty individuals bent on farming settled into the region in April 1631. The settlers benefited from the fur trade for about two years before the Company sent a commissary to break up the trade and claim a portion for themselves. Early Dutch traders had negotiated with the Delawares and established Fort Nassau in 1624 to facilitate trade, but disappointing returns caused them to abandon the fort two year later. Susquehannas, western enemies of the Delawares, gradually laid claim to the region and renewed transactions with the Dutch in 1633.<sup>15</sup>

Swanendael was not immune to Indian hostilities. In 1632, just a year after the first colonists arrived, a group of Natives attacked the colony. David Pietersen de Vries recounted the alleged massacre after hearing details of the events from the neighboring Nanticokes in December 1632. According to the Nanticokes, one of the Indians had taken a piece of tin painted with the arms of Holland. Another group, seeing the colonist's outrage, took it upon themselves to seek revenge and murdered the alleged thief. The Dutch were aghast upon hearing the news and told the killers that they only wished to reprimand the responsible party. The murdered Native's kinsmen demanded revenge after hearing about the events. Under the pretense of trade – the Natives carried a good quantity of bear skins – they entered a trade house and killed two men

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 55-56. The classic text on the Pequot War is Cave, *The Pequot War*. For an examination of the role of the Dutch in the Pequot War, see Mark Meuwese, "The Dutch Connection: New Netherland, the Pequots, and the Puritans in Southern New England, 1620–1638," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 2 (2011): 295–323.

<sup>15</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 56-57.

and their dog. Godyn had reached a breaking point. In 1635, he sold his patroonship back to the Company after Natives attacked his colony and Company officials ended trade opportunities.<sup>16</sup>

The 1629 Freedoms and Exemptions Act was supposed to increase New Netherland's population through the innovative, feudal-like patroon-system. Yet, more than anything, it catalyzed a string of hostilities between local indigenous groups and rogue Company officials like Daniel van Krieckenbeeck and Hans Jorissen Hontom. The foggy details surrounding the outbreaks of violence around Pavonia (1633), Fort Orange (1633), Swanendael (1632), and to some extent the House of Good Hope (1635) suggest a correlation between the colony's settlement expansion plans and a prolonged drought episode throughout the Hudson Valley between 1627 and 1636. Notably, only one of the six attempted *patroonships*, Rensselaerswyck, succeeded during this period. Most *patroonships* failed as farmers found more profits from trading furs than growing crops. What had originated as a plan to increase the colony's population instead incited deadly events that cautioned people away from moving to the colony. In 1628, approximately 270 individuals lived in New Netherland. Over the next decade, the population increased by a meager 750 – spread out over a region stretching from present-day Delaware, across the Hudson Valley, and all the way to Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>17</sup> Something had to change if the Company wanted to maintain its hold on the region against English and indigenous threats.

The Company enacted two measures to save the imperiled colony, though neither succeeded. First, they appointed a new director to oversee the colony in 1638. Willem Kieft, like many of his predecessors, had no colonial experience, administrative or otherwise. Instead, he

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 57. For De Vries' account of the Swanendael attack, see David Pietersz de Vries, *Voyages from Holland to America, A.D. 1632 to 1644*, trans. Henry Cruse Murphy (New York, NY, 1853), 33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 58; Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 32.



received the position through family connections. Kieft was born in Amsterdam in 1597, spent his youth serving as a merchant in France, and apparently never traveled outside Europe before his appointment as director. The Company officially recalled the previous director, Wouter van Twiller, for failing to promote unity amongst New Netherland's colonists and Company employees, though his alleged drinking problem probably did not help his case.<sup>18</sup> David de Vries, a prominent trader who hoped to replace van Twiller, was quite displeased with the Company's choice of Kieft. De Vries derided the Company's nepotistic tendencies in his account of the colony's history. "We were surprised that the West India Company would send such fools into this country...In the East Indies, no one was appointed governor, unless he had first had long service, and was found to be fit for it...but the West India Company sent...as superior officers, persons who never had command in their lives."<sup>19</sup> Adriaen van der Donck reiterated De Vries's criticisms several years later, bemoaning that "officers were chosen more from favor and friendship than merit." Nepotistic policies often resulted in inept leaders like Willem Kieft. The Company finally heeded De Vries' and Van der Donck's warnings in 1645 when they appointed Peter Stuyvesant to replace Kieft after putting up with nearly a decade of his disastrous command.<sup>20</sup>

A new Freedoms and Exemptions Act passed in 1640 marked the second major change for New Netherland. Under the new act the Company granted private merchants trading rights after they paid the Company a recognition fee. Johannes de Laet floated the idea of replacing the original 1629 Act in 1638, but the States General rejected his plans for not doing enough to

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<sup>18</sup> Van Twiller served from April 1633 - December 1637. Jape Jacobs contends that the paucity of records regarding van Twiller except an account by David de Vries has skewed the historical interpretation. De Vries had been vying to replace van Twiller and took out his anger, according to Jacobs, in writing negatively about van Twiller, see: Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 68.

<sup>19</sup> David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," 1655, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 191

<sup>20</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 63-64; Van der Donck, "The Representation of New Netherland," 1650, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 348.

stimulate the colony's demographic and economic growth. The revised 1640 plan passed thanks in large measure to the Company's cessation of its fur trade monopoly.<sup>21</sup>

The new Freedoms and Exemptions Act and growing population also inspired a new wave of patroons to try to establish small *patroonships*. Yet, just as had happened in the early 1630s, most of these new endeavors failed. Meyndert Meynderts van Keeren established Achter Kol, a colony located between the North and Hackensack Rivers, in 1641, but Indian attacks two years later destroyed the settlement. Multiple other patroons came and went, but all were ultimately abandoned.<sup>22</sup>

Kieft's appointment and the new Freedoms and Exemptions Act marked a shift in the character and purpose of New Netherland. Commercial trade interests gave way to agrarian settlement, and the Company's commercial and administrative authority subsided as the colony's private population increased. Colonial officials deployed in New Netherland adapted to the new circumstances as well. Instead of returning home to the Dutch Republic after their contractual terms expired, many opted instead to become free citizens and try their hand at farming in New Netherland.<sup>23</sup> New Netherland's inexperienced director and growing population, however, soon came into conflict with the Hudson Valley's increasingly oppressed indigenous population. And by 1639, tensions and small skirmishes between the two groups erupted.

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<sup>21</sup> Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 72-73.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Cornelis Melijn started a patroonship on Staten Island in 1641, but despite growing in size to approximately ninety people spread across eleven farms, the settlers abandoned the patroonship after a 1655 Indian attack left fifteen colonists dead. The string of failed patroonships ultimately convinced the Company to abandon the experiment and ultimately inspired the decision to end the system of patroonships completely in 1659, see: Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 76; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 60.

## 11. The Climatological Origins of Colonial Violence

By the end of 1645, New Netherland teetered on a precipice of decline. Director Willem Kieft, in charge of the colony since 1638, had driven his citizenry through a disastrous six-year conflict with local Munsee groups.<sup>24</sup> Today known alternatively as Kieft's War, the Dutch-Munsee War, or the Wappinger War, the war left dozens of colonists and nearly one thousand Natives dead. Colonists left in droves fearing continued escalation and perhaps another deadly conflict with an emerging Algonquian alliance. The colony's Amsterdam stakeholders frantically worried how to secure, or perhaps more realistically rescue, their hemorrhaging investment.

Historians trying to explain the war's causes have pointed to a 1639 decision by Director Kieft to impose a tax payable in peltries, wampum or maize on the region's indigenous peoples.<sup>25</sup> Kieft justified his tribute demand by claiming the Natives should help pay for expenses the Company accrued in their protection.<sup>26</sup> According to most historians, Kieft's tribute demand acted as a tipping point in what was already a deteriorating relationship between local indigenous tribes and their new Dutch neighbors. Recent research by historical climatologists allows historians a closer, nuanced understanding of the climatological context in which this episode of colonial violence took place. Extreme weather events, mainly in the form of cold winters and drought-ridden summers, help explain Kieft's timing and specific demands – demands that exacerbated the formative tensions of Kieft's War that historians have pointed to in the past.

Kieft's tribute demand and the ensuing war took place within the context of two extreme weather events. The demand itself came on the heels of a prolonged drought lasting from 1630 to

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<sup>24</sup> Though the war is usually presented as lasting from 1643 to 1645, which represents the height of Dutch and native tension, conflict had begun as early as 1639.

<sup>25</sup> "Resolution to Exact a Tribute from the Indians," September 15, 1639, *DRCHNY* XIII, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Much of the written record was destroyed after the war when on September 27, 1647 the ship *Princes Amelia* carrying both records of the conflict and its main protagonist, Director Willem Kieft, sunk off the coast of Wales.

at least 1636, while the war itself, which can be dated from 1641 to 1645, overlapped with extremely cold and long-lasting winters. Extreme weather and its impacts struck colonists and indigenous peoples alike. Drought and cold winters led to decreased growing seasons, crop failures, hunger, and malnourishment. As a result, the impact of epidemic diseases increased, protection and competition over scarce food resources intensified, trade relations became strained, and conflicts ensued. Putting the unfolding tensions between local indigenous tribes and New Netherlanders into an ecological context aids in understanding Dutch-Native relations and explains how Kieft's levy sparked a deadly conflict.

The climatological context surrounding Kieft's War also raises questions about European dependency on Natives. Ordinances and edicts forbidding European colonists from plundering indigenous fields have often been interpreted as evidence of European reliance on indigenous food sources. But to what extent were indigenous peoples able to circumvent the ecological implications of extreme drought and long winters? Had they developed resilience strategies and adaptive capacities capacious enough to meet both their own needs and the needs of desperate, hungry colonists? The extremes to which indigenous populations went to protect their harvests suggests that while Europeans might have desired Native assistance, Natives were not able or willing to stretch their own limited supplies to meet European needs.

Kieft's War followed closely on the heels of the Pequot War and mirrors closely that brutally violent episode in English-Native relations. In Katherine Grandjean's ecological interpretation of that event, she explains how hunger and competition over scarce food resources help explain the violent acts that took place between 1636 and 1638. The Pequot War, she writes, "arrived in a season of want" brought on by environmental distresses during the mid-1630s, most notably a strong hurricane that ravished crops in 1635. This is not, however, a story of

environmental determinism. Colonial processes and responses also had a role to play. Thousands of new colonists arrived amidst this period of scarcity, putting additional stresses on limited food provisions. Desperate ploys to acquire Indian corn – corn that both the English and the Pequots needed to survive – led to conflict, violence, and the infamous Mystic massacre.

Strong similarities exist between the Pequot War and Kieft's War. Both conflicts took place within the context of environmental distress, crop failures, and poor harvest yields that led to desperate ploys to acquire Indian maize, isolated episodes of violence that escalated into war, and a violent conclusion marked by an indigenous massacre. Even the participants in these two stories overlap. English colonists John Winthrop and Anne Hutchinson appear in both stories and John Underhill, the leader behind the Mystic River massacre, was hired by the Company and would once again surround an indigenous village only to massacre its inhabitants and torch their homes.<sup>27</sup>

Dutch explorers and colonists arrived in the Hudson Valley amid the region's coldest and driest period in the last 500 years.<sup>28</sup> Historical climatologists have argued that there have never been more episodes of drought in the Hudson Valley than when the Dutch West India Company tried to lay claim to what is now New York. The longest of these episodes, a continent-wide megadrought, lasted from 1555 to 1577 and came on the heels of a three-year drought that ended only a decade earlier (1543-1545). The sixteenth century, however, appears lush compared to the

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<sup>27</sup> Grandjean also argues that food scarcity was additionally exacerbated by awkward communication throughout the colony and with England that inhibited proper provisioning, see: Grandjean, "New World Tempests," 75–100. Alison Games has offered a similar interpretation of the Jamestown massacre of 1622, arguing that "an important role in terror and conflicts" acting as "a salvation (for the starving), a peril (for fearful English) and an opportunity (for patient attackers)," see: Games, "Violence on the Fringes," 522.

<sup>28</sup> Neil Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?," 1348. This was not the first period of extended drought conditions for the region. Corresponding to the classic Medieval Warm Period time frame, roughly 900-1300 AD, a long-term period of drought struck the Hudson Valley and much of North America, see: Pederson et al., "Medieval Warming, Little Ice Age, and European Impact on the Environment during the Last Millennium in the Lower Hudson Valley, New York, USA," 245.

seventeenth century. After 1630, just six years after the Company formally established New Netherland, a series of six drought episodes hit the Hudson Valley before the century's close. Five of these rank amongst the region's top ten worst droughts since 1531.<sup>29</sup>

Drought conditions are not readily apparent in seventeenth-century descriptions of New Netherland. Adriaen Van der Donck's *Description of New Netherland*, the most well-known and frequently cited source regarding New Netherland, is no exception. Van der Donck spoke at much length about New Netherland's "equable," "mild," and "salubrious," climate declaring that "on account of its wholesome climate...the country [New Netherland] has much to commend it," but rarely did he speak of drought. "Sea wind, a northerly breeze, or a shower," according to Van der Donck, tempered the hottest parts of summer. Winters were harsher than expected "owing to the keen air, sharp and penetrating, though always dry when the wind is from the north. Respite could come "even in the depth of winter" if the wind came from the south, "mild and warm weather" prevailed so as to make it feel like spring." Humidity was "seldom oppressive" nor did it continue for long. The only indication Van der Donck gave of potential drought episodes followed a lavish accounting: "[T]here is plenty of rain in season, more in some years than in others."<sup>30</sup> This passive account is by no means a reigning endorsement or corroboration of the intensive droughts several climate scientists have suggested. Van der Donck spoke more directly of a drought in his description of the colony included in the overtly promotional pamphlet

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<sup>29</sup> The five droughts listed occurred between 1630-1636; 1647-1651; 1661-1667; 1685-1692; 1697-1700, see supplemental table 3 in Neil Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?," *Journal of Climate* 26, no. 4 (February 2013): 1339–54. Extremely wet periods or pluvial events could inflict just as much damage as drought, but only one such episode occurred in the seventeenth century (1672-1680), see: supplemental table 4 in Neil Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?," *Journal of Climate* 26, no. 4 (February 2013): 1339–54.

<sup>30</sup> Van der Donck, *A Description of New Netherland*, 2, 38, 64-65.

“Representation of New Netherland” published in 1650, but Van der Donck left the exact date of this drought unclear.<sup>31</sup>

Three reasons help explain the descriptive exclusion and ambiguity of drought conditions by Van der Donck. First, Van der Donck wrote as a booster for what was at that time a fledgling colony. Pressure by English colonization in the south, but especially from burgeoning New England to the north, forced the West India Company to boost New Netherland’s population. With a vested financial interest himself, Van der Donck needed the colony to succeed and thus wrote with bias to promote the colony. Drought would have deterred rather than motivate Netherlanders to commit to a trans-Atlantic journey. Second, Van der Donck did not reside in New Netherland during the worst of the region’s drought episodes. He arrived to New Netherland in 1641 right between two of the worst droughts of the seventeenth century and returned to the Netherlands in 1649. So while his *Description* was published in 1655, Van der Donck observed at most only two years of New Netherland’s drought conditions. Thus it makes sense that Van der Donck hinted at some variability in precipitation but in general found the climate agreeable. Finally, this land was a new and foreign one to newly arrived immigrants. Extreme weather events would most likely have gone unnoticed or were perhaps simply understood as typical given recently arrived observers’ lack of historical contextualization.

Historians have relied heavily upon the limited written record provided by individuals like Adriaen Van der Donck to paint a picture of the Hudson Valley’s climate and geography for the entirety of the New Netherland’s short existence. Paleoclimatological sources such as tree rings can bring balance and nuance to these limited and unreliable written sources. In the case of New Netherland, drought conditions that are revealed by tree rings, although perhaps not understood

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<sup>31</sup> Van der Donck, “The Representation of New Netherland,” 1650, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 299.

by colonists, help explain the failure of early agricultural pursuits as well as the violent war between the Company and local indigenous groups during the 1640s.

While drought marked New Netherland's summers, bitterly cold temperatures prevailed during the region's winters. New Netherland did not escape the Little Ice Age's colder temperatures. Specific evidence for long-term temperature decreases comes from written records and from palynological studies. These studies reveal an increase in spruce (*Picea*), hemlock (*Tsuga*), and beech (*Fagus*) tree species, all of which prefer cooler climates.<sup>32</sup> La Niña cooling might have also been at play. Recent El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) event reconstructions establish several La Niña events during New Netherland's short existence including the years 1637 to 1639, 1654, 1658, and 1663.<sup>33</sup> La Niña events have been correlated to colder and wetter winters in the Northeast, especially in later winter beginning around February.

Unlike drought, colonists took note of frigid winters. Johan de Laet, adhering to the time's understanding of a direct relationship between latitude and climate, still took notice of the colony's difficult winter climate. "It is a good deal colder there than it ought to be according to the latitude; it freezes and snows severely in winter so that often there is a strong drift of ice in the river."<sup>34</sup> The Delaware River froze in 1633 while in 1642 the Hudson River near Rensselaerswijck froze over as early as November 25.<sup>35</sup> The Hudson continued to freeze over the next several winters and left Company ships ice-locked. Johannes Megapolensis, who arrived at Fort Orange in August 1642 to serve as its preacher, had already experienced several harsh winters by the time he published his account of the region and its Native inhabitants in 1644.

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<sup>32</sup> Pederson et al., "Medieval Warming, Little Ice Age, and European Impact on the Environment during the Last Millennium in the Lower Hudson Valley, New York, USA," 246.

<sup>33</sup> Gergis and Fowler, "A History of Enso Events Since A.D. 1525: Implications for Future Climate Change," 343–87.

<sup>34</sup> Johan de Laet, "Excerpts from the *New World*," 1625, 1630, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 50.

<sup>35</sup> Charles T. Gehring, ed., *Correspondence, 1647-1653*, trans. Charles T. Gehring, vol. XI, New Netherland Documents Series (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), x.



First simply stating that the “winters are very cold,” he later elaborated on how quickly and surely the winter snap arrived, freezing rivers over in a single night.<sup>36</sup> Further south, English colonists remarked on two separate occasions that the Chesapeake Bay had nearly froze over, first during the winter of 1641 to 1642 and then again in 1645 to 1646. In 1642, John Winthrop, relying upon information obtained from local indigenous peoples, relayed that “The frost was so great and continual this winter that all the Bay was frozen over, so much and so long, as the like, by the Indians’ relation, had not been so these forty years.”<sup>37</sup>

Extreme weather’s grasp reached beyond Europeans and struck indigenous peoples as well. Dozens of indigenous groups dwelled along the banks of the Delaware, Connecticut, and Hudson and beyond. In the north, west of the Fort Orange, resided the Iroquois nations. The Mohawks, whom the Dutch called ‘Maquas’ or ‘Mahakobaasen’ resided west of Fort Orange. Together with their fellow Iroquois nations the Oneidas, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, known collectively by the Dutch as ‘Sinneken,’ the Mohawks’ influence stretched as far west as Lake Erie. The Mohawks had only recently established their supremacy along the Hudson River. The Mahicans, known to the Dutch as ‘Mahikanders,’ had lived on both sides of the river prior to the seventeenth century but lost control of the western bank following the 1628 Mohawk-Mahican War.<sup>38</sup> After their loss, the Mahicans dwelled solely to the east of the river. Further south near Manhattan dwelled several Lenape tribes including the Esopus, Wappinger, Tappan, Manhatan, Raritan, Canarsee, and other Munsee-speaking tribes.<sup>39</sup> Closer to the Delaware River were several smaller Unami-speaking tribes. Finally, around the Susquehanna River lived the

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<sup>36</sup> Johannes Megapolensis, “A Short Account of the Mohawk Indians,” August 26, 1644, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 171.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Parker, *Global Crisis*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> The limited Dutch presence in the region had sided with the Mahicans during this conflict.

<sup>39</sup> Munsee is an eastern Algonquin language.

Susquehannocks who the Dutch referred to as the ‘Minquas.’<sup>40</sup> While the Dutch at times made distinctions between these various groups, typically their records made little distinction and referred to indigenous peoples not by their tribal names but simply as *Indianen* (Indians) or more frequently *wilden* (wild ones).<sup>41</sup>

Trade with Natives marked the earliest years of Dutch-indigenous relations in the Hudson Valley after Henry Hudson’s 1609 voyage revealed the extent and possibility of such a trade. “[T]he beaver,” Van Der Donck explained, “is the main reason and the source of the means for the initial settlement of this fine country by Europeans.”<sup>42</sup> Fur trading occurred either near Fort Amsterdam on Manhattan or further north around present-day Albany either at Fort Nassau or later Fort Orange. The Mohawk in the north and the Munsee in the south hunted and trapped beavers during the winter when the animal’s shiny and much-sought after guard hair was at its fullest. The price traders were willing to pay for these pelts increased if Indians had worn them for some time. Wearing the furs allowed the fur time to absorb the bear grease with which Natives typically covered themselves. Then, from spring through summer, the Mohawks traveled to Fort Nassau and later Fort Orange or Beverwijck and the Munsee to near-by Fort Amsterdam. Both groups traded beaver as well as otter, marten, and fox furs in exchange for an assortment of European goods including arms, gunpowder, shot, textiles, alcohol, knives, axes, kettles, adzes, and beads.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 22-23.

<sup>41</sup> *Wilden* which might be translated as wild ones gives a false impression. Adriaen van der Donck explained that indigenous peoples were referred to as such because of their religion, rather than their race, see Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 22. The meaning and purpose behind certain word choices used to describe indigenous peoples has recently gained the attention of several scholars including Susanah Shaw Romney, see: Russell Shorto, *Interview with Susanah Romney, Intimate Networks and the 17th-Century Atlantic*, New Netherland Praatjes by the New Netherland Institute, Podcast Audio, October 13, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Van der Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Otto, *The Dutch-Munsee Encounter in America: The Struggle for Sovereignty in the Hudson Valley* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 56-57, 66; Van de Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 84, 118; Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 211.

Little is known about Dutch-Native trade relations prior to the official chartering of the West India Company in 1621. However, the establishment of Fort Nassau on Castle (now Westerlo) Island near present-day Albany in 1614 or 1615 suggests trade with the Mohawk initially caught the attention of early private traders. After a freshet damaged Fort Nassau in 1617, however, it was decided not to rebuild the structure, since the “nation there was somewhat discontented, and not easy to live with.” Instead, the traders decided try their luck further east where they intended to “plant a colony among the Maikans [Mahicans].”<sup>44</sup>

The Upper Hudson remained the center of fur trade throughout the Dutch Republic’s colonial presence in North America, but some trade did take place with the Munsee further south in Fort Amsterdam near the mouth of the Hudson. In addition to limited trade in furs, the Munsee quickly emerged as the Company’s primary suppliers of wampum. Wampum acted as a universal currency in the Northeast. Mahicans, Mohawks, Hurons, Algonquins, and Montagnais all accepted these strings or belts of whelk and clam beads. The Munsee and other Long Island Natives manufactured wampum. As traders realized wampum’s importance, the Munsee began specializing in providing traders with the currency and spent less time trapping. Dutch traders then used Munsee-manufactured wampum to conduct trade with the Mohawk and Mahican.<sup>45</sup>

The Munsee’s importance to Company traders thus rested squarely on the Munsee’s ability to provide them with furs and more importantly wampum for the beaver trade. By the 1640s, however, the Munsee’s capacity to fulfill these demands had reached a breaking point. Company officials and New Netherland colonists alike began to describe the Munsee, according to historian Paul Otto, “as useless (or bad Indians) because they could no longer offer the Dutch

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<sup>44</sup> Nicolaes van Wassenauer, “Excerpt from *Historisch Verhael*,” 1624-1630, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 67.

<sup>45</sup> In addition to holding economic value, wampum also held ritualistic value and was used to represent the formation of alliances and kinship ties. Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 200; Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 58-59.

furs, agricultural products, or other utilitarian items.”<sup>46</sup> Without something to offer Dutch colonists, the Munsee lost their negotiating leverage and became vulnerable to abuse.<sup>47</sup>

Multiple factors led to the beaver trade’s decline. Historians have pointed to overhunting, inter-tribal warfare, French entrance into the trade, and changes in European fashion as primary causes.<sup>48</sup> If overhunting was the cause, the extirpation of the lower Hudson’s beaver population would have had significant ecological implications. Fewer beavers would have translated to fewer beaver dams and water impoundments. In response, the ecosystem would have adjusted to drier wetland conditions. Nearby forests would have shifted from supporting wet to dry habitat communities; species diversity would have shifted with a decline in wet habitat-dependent amphibians, birds, and possibly certain mammals; and ecological productivity and species richness would have declined.<sup>49</sup> Reciprocally, overhunting might have impacted Dutch agricultural pursuits as well. Two biologists, after examining the impact of temperature, precipitation, and beaver activity on the availability of open water in boreal forest wetlands in east-central Alberta, concluded that beavers have the ability to mitigate drought conditions through the construction of beaver dams. Their conclusions indicate that beaver activity and active beaver lodges accounted for 80% of open water area availability. An active beaver

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<sup>46</sup> Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 66.

<sup>47</sup> For beaver trade decline beginning in 1624, see: Robert E. Henshaw, “Historical Facts/Biological Questions,” in *Environmental History of the Hudson River: Human Uses That Changed the Ecology, Ecology That Changed Human Uses* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 4; Kevin A. McBride, “Fort Island: Conflict and Trade in Long Island Sound,” in *Native Forts of the Long Island Sound Area, Readings in Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Gaynell Stone, vol. 3 (Stony Brook, New York: Suffolk County Archaeological Association, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Quantitative evidence for a depletion of beaver in the lower Hudson by the 1630s is scant to say the least. Jaap Jacobs has suggested historians’ have based their conclusions regarding the depletion of the beaver population in the upper Hudson by the 1660s more on qualitative than quantitative measures.

<sup>49</sup> Henshaw, “Historical Facts/Biological Questions,” 5.

population, whether during wet or dry periods, can led to a 9-fold increase in open water availability compared to periods without an active beaver presence.<sup>50</sup>

Colonists and Natives responded to the shifting ecological, political, and commercial situation in diverse ways. Anthropologist and ethnohistorian William Starna posits that “the rapid depletion of furs on the coast and in the lower Hudson Valley” led Munsee and Mahicans to sell their land. He goes as far to say that the purchase of Manhattan Island by the Dutch in 1626 might be an early indication of beaver scarcity.<sup>51</sup> Paul Otto argues that a decline in the Munsee’s beaver supply resulted in a shift in the hub of the beaver trade from the lower to upper Hudson. Otto argues, though, that this did not eliminate the Munsee from the beaver trade. Instead, they might have emerged as middlemen in the trade, using their “proximity to rivers and waterways...to facilitate trade between the Dutch and the Susquehannocks and other interior tribes.” More importantly, the Munsee ramped up wampum production “to guarantee themselves a place within the newly developed European trade network.”<sup>52</sup> As the Munsee increased wampum production, however, anthropologist Lynn Ceci argues they would have lost focus on their seasonal subsistence strategies, created permanent year-round settlements, and became “more dependent on their trading partners for food and other goods.” A situation that if true, would have been disastrous for the Munsee during times of drought, crop failure, dearth, famine, and disease.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Glynnis A. Hood and Suzanne E. Bayley, “Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*) Mitigate the Effects of Climate on the Area of Open Water in Boreal Wetlands in Western Canada,” *Biological Conservation* 141, no. 2 (February 2008): 556–67.

<sup>51</sup> William A. Starna, “The Native-Dutch Experience in the Mohawk Valley,” in *Explorers, Fortunes and Love Letters*, 30.

<sup>52</sup> Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 67-68.

<sup>53</sup> The number of beaver and otter skins shipped to the Netherlands steadily increased between 1624 (4,700); 1628 (7,685); and 1635 (16,304). The prices garnered for skins rose as well from 5.77 to 8.21 guilders between 1624 and 1635, see: Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 43. For a more in-depth look at New Netherland’s growing fur trade, see: Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 198-201.

Early Dutch traders in New Netherland who focused heavily on trade relied upon indigenous generosity to satisfy their hungry stomachs. While records from early traders are no longer extant, later testimony by indigenous groups in response to the 1639 levy imposition confirms that traders required indigenous food assistance from the start. A pamphlet, later published in the Netherlands, recounts an exchange between the New Netherland council and leaders of surrounding indigenous groups. During the conversation indigenous leaders laid out numerous reasons for why they “did not consider themselves bound to contribute” the goods Kieft demanded. Amongst their explanations was a provocative and telling question. “Have we not, then, *Swannekens* (Netherlanders), when you first came here, and had no *mochols* (ships), furnished you victuals for two winters through, when, without that, you must have perished with hunger?”<sup>54</sup> Even when ships regularly arrived in port and more farmers committed to settling in the colony, Netherlanders continued to rely upon indigenous peoples for help. Indeed, Dutch colonist’s reliance upon indigenous subsistence support was a rather common occurrence with colonists regularly supplementing their crops with maize from Indians.<sup>55</sup> In 1628, the Reverend Jonas Michaëlius complained about the scant rations available in the colony, remarking that he would have to pass through the winter “without butter and other necessities” while the provisions which arrived by boat were “all hard stale food.” Recourse from these depravities, he explained, could only be come by trading “knives, bead, and the like” with local indigenous groups who could provide “proper wares.”<sup>56</sup> Adriaen Van der Donck reiterated the Company’s dependency on indigenous food stuffs upon his arrival to New Netherland in 1641 stating that the Natives “raise

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<sup>54</sup> Adriaen van der Donck and Henry Cruse Murphy, *Vertoogh van Nieu Nederland; and Breeden Raedt Aende Vereenichde Nederlandsche Provintien. Two Rare Tracts, Printed in 1649-’50. Relating to the Administration of Affairs in New Netherland* (New York: Baker, Godwin & co., 1854), 146.

<sup>55</sup> Jacobs, *The Colony of New Netherland*, 118-119; Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York*, 44.

<sup>56</sup> “Letter of Reverend Jonas Michaëlius,” 1628, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 130.

so much corn and green beans that we purchase these from them in fully laden yachts and sloops.”<sup>57</sup>

The Company worried about the colony’s reliance on indigenous peoples, however, and made a concerted effort to promote agricultural production. Initially, all agricultural production in New Netherland fell under the domain of the West India Company. The Company instructed Director Willem Verhulst before his departure from Amsterdam in early 1625 to “give each family as much land as they can properly cultivate.”<sup>58</sup> Before departing, colonists themselves pledged to “plant and sow on the lands allotted to them such products and crops as the Commander and his Council shall order, without making any change therein for any private reason.” Failure to live up to this pledge would result in a punishment to be determined by the colony’s Council.<sup>59</sup>

Early contracts between farmers and the Company set terms to promote agricultural production but tended to favor the Company’s financial well-being over a farmer’s prosperity. These contracts stipulated that the Company would retain ownership of all lands with colonists acting as tenants. The Company additionally provided farm buildings, tools, and livestock. In return, farmers paid a yearly rent of one hundred guilders plus eighty pounds of butter. At the end of the contract, farmers were required to return all property to the Company. This included the land, buildings, tools, and the original quantity of livestock granted to the tenant. Any additional livestock that may have been birthed during the contract period would remain with the tenant.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Van der Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 98.

<sup>58</sup> “Instructions for Willem Verhulst,” January 1624, *Documents Relating to New Netherland, 1624-1626*, in the *Henry E. Huntington Library*, 40.

<sup>59</sup> “Provisional Regulations for Colonists adopted by the Assembly of the Nineteen of the West India Company,” March 28, 1624, in Arnold J.F. van Laer, trans., *Documents Relating to New Netherland, 1624-1626*, in the *Henry E. Huntington Library*, 1.

<sup>60</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 217; Folkerts, “The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan,” 182.

Farmers were also obligated to pay several taxes. A general tax of ten stivers per *morgen* of land and one guilder for each head of cattle was imposed on all farmers but was considered “so moderate that neither the English nor others can reasonably complain against it.”<sup>61</sup> Less favored was the biblically-derived *tienden* (tenths) which was used to pay costs associated with the establishment of the church including the salary of the minister.<sup>62</sup>

Most families planted and cultivated a small kitchen garden in addition to the larger farm plots dedicated to grains and corn. Though, archeological records suggest these farmers planted very little in their gardens. Of the numerous European vegetables available to colonists in the first half of the seventeenth century only cabbage, turnip, kale, and mustard can be conclusively found in New Netherland gardens with the additional possibility of cauliflower. In addition to European-imported seeds, families planted a variety of indigenous plants including fruits, berries, and squash/pumpkin plus several indigenous medicinal herbs including amaranth, lambsquarters, pokeweed, pumpkin/squash, and strawberries. Colonists also planted medicinal herbs of both European and North American origins including purslane (*Portulaca sp.*), bedstraw (*Galium sp.*), and knotweed (*Polygonum sp.*).<sup>63</sup> Additionally, colonists regularly planted fruit trees including apples, peach, and cherry near their homes.

In 1629, the Company took yet another step to promote agriculture through the introduction of the patroon-system. This system was approved as part of the 1629 Freedoms and

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<sup>61</sup> “Letter from the Directors in Amsterdam to Director General and Council,” November 23, 1654, *Correspondence, 1654-1658*, vol. XII, New Netherland Documents Series (Syracuse University Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>62</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 220.

<sup>63</sup> According to Joel Grossman, the early surge and later decline in indigenous potherbs and starchy seed food sources during the early seventeenth century is indicative of a greater reliance on “a broader range of Native American food sources than previously recognized, see: Joel W. Grossman, “Archaeological Indices of Environmental Change and Colonial Ethnobotany in Seventeenth-Century Dutch New Amsterdam,” in *Environmental History of the Hudson River: Human Uses That Changed the Ecology, Ecology That Changed Human Uses*, ed. Robert E. Henshaw (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 101, 104, 113.



Exemptions Act, itself a compromise between New Netherland's trade and settlement factions. The act maintained the Company's trade monopoly on fur in order to appease the trade faction, but allowed the settlement faction to promote the colonization of New Netherland, albeit at the faction's own expense. It stipulated that any land within the confines of New Netherland including land bought legally from indigenous peoples could be bought and established as a *patroonship*, with the noted exception of Manhattan Island which the Company retained as a trade center. Once patroons purchased land they had to establish a colony of at least fifty people, all at least fifteen years of age, within four years. Of these individuals, at least one quarter had to be settled in New Netherland within a year.<sup>64</sup> Due to the "scantiness of the population," according to Amsterdam-based chronicler Nicolaes van Wassenauer, the purpose of the 1629 *Freedoms and Exemptions* was to increase the colony's population and agricultural abundance.<sup>65</sup>

The farmers who risked the trans-Atlantic journey soon ran into troubles outside their control. Hints of trouble with New Netherland's agricultural production began as early as 1628. Nicolaes Van Wassenauer compiled reports from New Netherland back in the Republic and lamented that despite a successful winter grain crop that year, the summer grain "ripened before it was half grown in consequence of the excessive heat," thus leaving it "very light." Wassenauer continued by assuring his readers that this was only a minor problem since "the cattle sent thither have thriven well, and everything promises increase."<sup>66</sup> Wassenauer's hope of promise would be short lived.

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<sup>64</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 112-113

<sup>65</sup> Nicolaes van Wassenauer, "Excerpt from *Historisch Verhael*," 1624-1630, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 89.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

As a six-year drought struck New Netherland beginning in 1630, the colony's agricultural production dropped precipitously.<sup>67</sup> According to Reverend Jonas Michaëlius, who had earlier complained of poor provisions, the chief cause of this decline rested with a lack of "horses and cows, and industrious workers for the building of houses and forts." Man and animal together, he argued, could "make our farming more profitable." Company directors echoed Michaëlius's bitter complaints. They added new stipulations to Company contracts that compelled farmers to tend their crops "diligently and industriously...in order that the Company may annually receive a good quantity of grain...[that] being the Company's principal object herein."<sup>68</sup> Farmers' diligence and industry or the lack thereof, however, could not compensate for drought's far-reaching impacts.

The Company, unaware of the drought's severity, addressed poor yields in multiple ways. First, they tried to wrest more grain by exerting pressure on Manhattan's tenant farmers. For example, Jan van Vorst's farm contract stipulated he "sow every year as much grain as he and his man will be able to conveniently manage."<sup>69</sup> Second, when these efforts failed, the Company turned to farmers further north to provide grain to hungry colonists on Manhattan. Farms further north along the Hudson River benefited from regular flooding that deposited fertile river clay that made for exceptional soil. As a result of this difference in fertility, at least as early as 1638, those in Manhattan received yearly grain deliveries from the *patroonship* of Rensselaerswijck. This might have worked temporarily, but crop failures soon struck northern farmers as well. Third, the Company could at times receive relief from ships arriving from *patria*. The same ship

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<sup>67</sup> Ironically, historian Jan Folkerts has argued that the cause of this decline can be directly linked to the Company's 1629 decision to issue the *Freedoms and Exemptions* on behalf of the colony's patroons, see: Folkerts, "The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan," 184.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Folkerts, "The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan," 183-184.

<sup>69</sup> "Lease from Director Kieft to Jan van Vorst," March 31, 1639, *New York Historical Manuscripts I: Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1638-1642*, ed. Charles T. Gehring, trans. Arnold J. F van Laer, Online (New Netherland Institute), 83.

caravan that escorted Willem Kieft to New Netherland in March of 1638 also carried a bevy of foodstuffs. While provisions from the Republic provided a temporary morale boost, provisioning ships arrived sporadically and could not be counted upon.<sup>70</sup>

The Company also tried to provide farmers financial relief by temporarily suspending the collection of tenths. On June 24, 1638, the Director and Council of New Netherland passed an ordinance that granted new farmers a ten-year suspension of tenths in response to continued petitions by colonists desiring to cultivate the land.<sup>71</sup> If the case of Wouter Van Twiller, former director of New Netherland and owner of one of Manhattan's largest and most productive farms, is any indication, the Company's decision to exempt new farmers from tenths was due to the inability of current tenants to pay. In a contract dating to May 24, 1642, Wouter van Twiller's past debts to the Company dating back to 1638 were nullified and an additional exemption was granted until the end of his lease in 1645.<sup>72</sup> Even this long-term relief, however, could not compensate for the impact of repetitive drought.

Tax relief did little to raise farmers' spirits or dispel their worries and many chose to leave New Netherland and return to the Republic. The years 1632 to 1638 witnessed a mass exodus of Company farmers. When Kieft himself arrived in March 1638, a total of five farms had already been abandoned. Van Rensselaer, one of New Netherland's most successful patroons, immediately went to work inventorying and purchasing Company farms on Manhattan so that he could send any surplus inventory north in support of his patroon. Within five years nearly every Company official and farmer on Manhattan had sold their animals to Van Rensselaer. Van

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<sup>70</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 219; Jan Folkerts, "The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan," 135-137, 185.

<sup>71</sup> "Ordinance," June 24, 1638, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674* (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), 16.

<sup>72</sup> "Extract from the register of Resolutions of the directors of the West India Company," April 11, 1641, *New York Historical Manuscripts III: Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1648-1660* (Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 174.

Rensselaer himself saw his actions as merciful. By purchasing Manhattanites land, he freed them from what in his estimation was poor soil so that they could pursue better land elsewhere.<sup>73</sup>

Drought, poor soil fertility, and the opportunity to sell out to patroons wrought havoc on Manhattan's productivity. The island's livestock inventory plummeted between 1630 and 1639. Records indicate that in 1630 there were 60 cows and 47 horses on Manhattan. By 1639, these figures had dropped to 30 cattle and six horses.<sup>74</sup> Despite the Company's efforts to promote and transform New Netherland from a trade colony to settlement colony, extreme weather hampered their attempts. Drought precluded the growing number of New Netherland's farmers from reaping grains from the soil and led to famine conditions. By the end of the 1630s, Dutch colonists, just like the Dutch traders who preceded them, turned to indigenous peoples for subsistence assistance.<sup>75</sup>

Company leaders turned to nearby indigenous groups, first on a contractual basis and later by means of forced tributes, to feed New Netherland's colonists. Between September 20 and November 20, 1639, New Netherland's governing council granted David Provost the right to trade with the Indians for 500 *schepels* of maize on behalf of Govert Lockemans.<sup>76</sup> To protect the Company's trade interests, however, Provost had to agree to offer a lower price for the maize than the Company. This ensured that Natives would continue to trade directly with the Company itself due to the Company's more favorable trade terms. This contract indicates two important situations in New Netherland around 1639. First, the rather large sum of maize requested by Provost suggests that the colony was not producing enough maize to support itself. Secondly, the

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<sup>73</sup> Folkerts, "The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan," 184.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Otto, *The Dutch-Munsee Encounter in America*, 92; Willem Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission: The Two Worlds of Dominie Everardus Bogardus, 1607-1647*, trans. Myra Heerspink Scholz (Leiden, the Netherlands: BRILL, 2007), 472.

<sup>76</sup> A *schepel* is a measure equivalent to .764 of an English bushel or roughly what a man could carry in a sack, see: *New York Historical Manuscripts I: Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1638-1642*, ii.

willingness of the Company to pay more for the same goods also suggests that they were in a less powerful trade position. Lowering the price paid for maize might have offended the Company's Native trade partners and left the Company without necessary foodstuffs.<sup>77</sup>

Another indication of Dutch dependency on indigenous peoples for maize arose early in November of 1640. Appearing before the Council, Abraham Planc, Cornelis Lambersen Cool, and George Rappaelje testified to having violated a 1639 Company policy that required all traders to accept no less than 12 *schepels* of maize from indigenous peoples in exchange for one coat of duffel. The defendants, however, pled guilty to accepting only 10 and 11 *schepels* in a trade. As punishment, the Council required the three men to comply with the ordinance and/or pay the stated fine of 100 florins for violating the ordinance. While a hefty penalty, the court appears to have gone easy on the defendants. The original ordinance stipulated that anyone caught in violation would also have to forfeit their privilege to trade for life.<sup>78</sup> Regardless, the case highlights the Company's dependence on indigenous maize and the lengths they were willing to go to prosecute those who violated the Company's established trade prices.

New Netherland's failed agricultural pursuits, catalyzed by prolonged drought conditions, not only threatened the longevity of the colony but also placed Dutch Brazil and the Company's Caribbean colonies in peril. Several Company leaders so strongly believed in New Netherland's agricultural potential that they fervently held to the notion that it could act as a provisioning colony for the Company's Atlantic holdings. The reality was a far cry from this aspiration. New

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<sup>77</sup> "Contract between David Provoost and Govert Lockemans," September 20, 1639, *New York Historical Manuscripts I: Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1638-1642*, 150-151.

<sup>78</sup> "Council Minutes," November 1, 1640, *New York Historical Manuscripts IV: Council Minutes, 1638-1649*, 94-95. For the original ordinance, see: "Council Minutes," September 22, 1639, *New York Historical Manuscripts I: Register of the Provincial Secretary, 1638-1642*, 61.

Netherland never exported grain to the Dutch Republic or Dutch Brazil and only once, in 1654, sent corn to Curaçao.<sup>79</sup>

Indigenous peoples in the Hudson Valley, in contrast to newly-arrived Dutch colonists, had developed a variety of subsistence strategies that allowed them to survive earlier extreme weather events. These strategies, however, could not protect them against the dual threat of climate and colonialism. The Munsees and Mahicans, located south of the Cohoes Falls, tended to live in small, seasonal camps near rivers and relied heavily upon seasonal fish runs and foraging to supplement their diets. According to archaeologist James Bradley, over the course of “hundreds, even thousands of years,” the Mahican established a seasonal subsistence pattern based on “a keen awareness of when and where essential resources were available.” In the spring, Mahicans moved to sites along the Hudson or its tributaries and used nets, spears, and weirs to catch alewives, shad, and sturgeon. The blossoming of spring allowed them to forage wild plants while recently flooded plains could be planted with maize, beans, and squash. During the summer, the Mahican fished and tended crops. Autumn was consumed by the harvesting and winter storage of planted and wild crops, hunting of summer-fattened game, fishing, and the collection of nuts. When winter hit, the Mahican abandoned their river encampments and moved to interior sites located near ponds and marshes. There, they survived on their winter storage, ice fishing, and hunting deer, bear, beaver, otters, and turtles.<sup>80</sup>

Adriaen van der Donck detailed the agricultural and foraging strategies of the Hudson Valley’s indigenous populations. He recounted a discussion with some local Natives in which he

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<sup>79</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 216; Folkerts, “The Failure of West India Company Farming on the Island of Manhattan,” 182.

<sup>80</sup> James W. Bradley, *Before Albany: An Archaeology of Native-Dutch Relations in the Capital Region 1600-1664* (Albany, New York: New York State Museum, 2007), 9-12; Starna, “The Native-Dutch Experience in the Mohawk Valley,” 30.

learned that they had made use of some land that now appeared as a young forest nearly twenty-five or twenty-six years earlier. The Natives assured Van der Donck that “you will do well, it is very good land and bears grain in great quantity.” The Dutch also adapted a Native practice of bush burning. Van der Donck described how each fall the Indians burned woods, plains, and marshlands in order to facilitate hunting, thin out the forest, clear old deadwood, and increase the game.<sup>81</sup> “Fish and meat of every kind,” Van der Donck recounted, constituted the Native’s typical fare. Maize, or “Turkish wheat” as the Dutch called it, was pounded into grits that could be used to make bread or could be added to meat to make a broth. More commonly, though, the Natives used corn to make *sappaen*, a much-consumed porridge. Van der Donck, amazed at its importance, remarked “that rarely a day passes without their eating it...and one can hardly ever enter an Indian dwelling that this porridge is not being eaten or prepared.” Natives also brought along “parched meal made of roasted corn” when hunting or on long journeys.<sup>82</sup> Women planted maize each spring along with assorted beans, pumpkins, and squash in unfenced, unmanured, and relatively untended plots. Elderly and young men alike took to fishing in the spring and early summer with the young and later elderly switching their energy to hunting come fall and winter. Natives used traps, arrows, and guns to hunt and kill bears and wolves but most importantly deer that they killed “in great numbers in the coastal areas and near riverbanks, where most of the Christians live.”<sup>83</sup> The seasonal subsistence patterns of the Mahican and Munsee could support approximately two to three thousand Mahican and perhaps as many as twelve thousand Munsee.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Van der Dock, *Description of New Netherland*, 20-21.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 76-78.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 97-99

<sup>84</sup> Starna, “The Native-Dutch Experience in the Mohawk Valley,” 30.

The Mohawk, located further north, relied more heavily upon cultivated crops and hunting.<sup>85</sup> Their subsistence strategies appear to have been sufficient to protect them from the worst of the drought between 1630 and 1636. Harmen van den Bogaert, who traveled amongst the Mohawk and Oneida during the winter of 1634-1635, indicated that the Mohawk had stored plenty of vegetables. Just three days into his voyage, Van den Bogaert and his guides came to Onekagoncka, near present-day Auriesville and the west mouth of Schoharie Creek. There, they found “the houses were full of corn that they call *onersti*, and we saw maize; yes, in some of the houses more than 300 bushels.” The chief of the village, Adriochten, welcomed Van den Bogaert and treated him to a meal of venison, pumpkins, and beans.<sup>86</sup> While the Company suffered the worst of drought and harvest failure, the Mohawk appeared to have stockpiled ample supplies to weather the drought.

Extent records are less clear about the ability of the Munsee to withstand the drought of 1630 to 1636. While the Munsee most likely relied upon fish and game during the drought, Van der Donck’s indication that the Natives relied heavily upon a maize-based porridge to supplement their typical diets suggests that a threat to the limited quantities of maize available to the Munsee would have put additional stress on an already weakened population. If the Munsee followed the pattern of other wampum-producing groups who shifted their subsistence strategies to rely more on horticulture to support their specialization in wampum production, they would have been more heavily hit by the 1630s’ drought. Maize required a long, frost-free growing season, warm summers, and moderate rainfall. The extreme weather events New Netherland

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<sup>85</sup> James Bradley suggests that the inability of fish to migrate above the Cohoes Falls and a reliance on cultivated crops might have led to a more sedentary pattern of settlement amongst the Mohawks. However, continued cultivation led to soil fertility and wood depletion which in turn led to a pattern of village relocation, see: Bradley, *Before Albany*, 16.

<sup>86</sup> “Narrative of a Journey into the Mohawk and Oneida Country,” 1634-1635, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 140-141.



experienced during this period – drought followed by extreme winters – could have pushed the Munsee to the edge of their subsistence capacity and perhaps to violence in an effort to protect their lives, livelihood, and crops.

If drought impacted the Munsee’s agricultural productivity it would have left a large percentage of the population malnourished and vulnerable to epidemic diseases. This might have been the case in 1633 when smallpox struck the Hudson Valley.<sup>87</sup> Estimates suggest the Mohawk lost upwards of 60% of their population during this period. Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, who visited the Mohawk in 1634 to discuss the beaver trade, had to meet with Adriochten, the most principle chief, about a quarter mile from the main Mohawk camp, “because many Indians here in the castle had died of smallpox.”<sup>88</sup> Drought induced-malnourishment and colonial violence potentially increased this death toll. Textual evidence is unclear about the reach of this particular epidemic and its impact on the Munsee. However, the collective toll of epidemic diseases on the Hudson Valley’s indigenous populations is clear. Natives had told Van der Donck that since European’s arrival, “their numbers have dwindled owing to smallpox and other causes to the extent that there is now barely one for every ten.” Van der Donck himself met at least one smallpox survivor who was left blinded by cataracts.<sup>89</sup>

The societal toll experienced by smallpox survivors went beyond individual blindness. Epidemic-induced population loss could cause decreased fertility rates, disruptions in societal and political processes due to the loss of influential members, ruptures in kinship relations and

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<sup>87</sup> This was not the first time an infectious disease struck the Hudson Valley. Historians have suggested that the Munsee had been previously struck at an unknown date, see: William A. Starna, *From Homeland to Newland: A History of the Mahican Indians, 1600-1830* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 68-69.

<sup>88</sup> Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert, *A Journey into Mohawk and Oneida Country, 1634-1635: The Journal of Harmen Meyndertsz van den Bogaert* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 4

<sup>89</sup> Van de Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 69, 74; Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 69.

mourning war rituals, and spiritual crises.<sup>90</sup> Population loss would have also continued to exacerbate an on-going food crisis. This was a vicious circle. Drought would have exacerbated rates of malnourishment and death which in turn would have exacerbated the impacts of drought. Routine subsistence tasks, according to William Starna, would have been disrupted, subsistence knowledge could have been lost, and access to land now deemed by the Dutch as vacant would have been decreased. There is some indication that the Munsee responded to their increasingly precarious position via village concentration and a renewed focus on cultural retention, but with fewer members with less access to natural resources, it is no wonder that the Dutch began to perceive the Munsee as “useless” allies.<sup>91</sup>

European-introduced livestock posed yet another threat to Native crops. Virginia DeJohn Anderson deftly detailed the ways in which European livestock, left to roam in New England and the Chesapeake, led to strife and conflict between English colonists and indigenous peoples.<sup>92</sup> Drought conditions only exacerbated these tense livestock-induced situations in New Netherland. The Dutch allowed their livestock to roam free so they could forage in nearby woods. Livestock also roamed into indigenous peoples’ gardens. Dutch leaders, however, did not condone the destruction of Native gardens by European’s livestock and at least on one occasion took steps to prevent future damages. In May 1640, Native’s began to complain “that their Corn hills are trampled under foot and uprooted by Hogs and other Cattle, and consequently great damage is done when the Maize is growing.” In response, Company leaders passed an ordinance prohibiting livestock destruction. They ordered farmers whose “lands lie contiguous to Indian plantations...to take due care of their Horses, Cows, Hogs, Goats and Sheep, and prevent them,

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<sup>90</sup> For increased occurrence of indigenous weather prayers and magic during early European colonization, see: White, “Shewing the Difference Between Their Conjuration, and Our Invocation on the Name of God for Rayne.”

<sup>91</sup> Starna, *From Homeland to New Land*, 47-48; Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 66, 69.

<sup>92</sup> Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*.

by fences or otherwise, damaging the corn of the Indians.”<sup>93</sup> Anyone who failed to do so would be required to pay for the damages and incur a fee.<sup>94</sup>

The Council saw a direct relation between damage to Native gardens and the colony’s own survival. If too much was damaged, the Council declared, it would follow “that the Maize will be dear at the time of the Harvest and our good people [will] suffer want,” since the Natives would be “incited to remove and to entertain feelings of hatred against our Nation.”<sup>95</sup> The Council was partially correct in their foresight. Hudson Valley’s indigenous peoples did entertain feelings of hatred toward the Company, but those feelings began to simmer over a decade of bad weather, disease epidemics, and colonial tiffs. They were finally ignited by Kieft’s compulsory tribute demand.

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<sup>93</sup> “Ordinance,” May 9, 1640, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*, 22.

<sup>94</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 223-224, 273; Van Der Donck, *Description of New Netherland*, 98

<sup>95</sup> “Ordinance,” May 9, 1640, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*, 22.

## 12. Kieft's War

Director Willem Kieft's decision to impose a levy upon the Hudson Valley's indigenous population payable in maize, wampum ignited a war.<sup>96</sup> Whether war was Kieft's intention is open to debate. Scholars have argued that Kieft based his levy on European war-time practices and that he believed the Munsee were subjugated peoples who needed to bend to Dutch power.<sup>97</sup> However, from a climatological perspective the levy can be seen in part as a response to New Netherland's drought-induced agricultural crisis. Kieft, who perceived the Munsee's declining importance to the Company, attempted to drain the last bit of resources he could from the Munsee in an effort to feed a hungry colony.

The Munsee realized their declining importance in the eyes of the Dutch and initially tried to maintain their relevancy to the Company by selling land and wampum. The misinterpretation of land sales has often been forwarded as another causative factor in the opening salvos of Kieft's War. Company demand for land, however, was itself spurred by the colony's changing trade policies. In August 1638, the Company proposed a new scheme aimed at increasing the Company's bottom line. The decision was a response to pressures from the States General regarding the overwhelming financial losses incurred by the Company in the maintenance of New Netherland. Given the level of illicit trade in the colony, the Company agreed to end its trade monopoly and allowed anyone who was "permitted to ship goods to New Netherland, to trade directly with the Indians, and to export peltry to Europe on their own accounts."<sup>98</sup> The aim of the act was two-fold. Opening up trade would spur an increase in population and trade and, in

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<sup>96</sup> Jaap Jacobs and Mark Meuwese, amongst others, have debated the origin of the tribute payment. Jaap Jacobs traces it to the Netherlands, Meuwese suggests he got the idea from a similar demand levied upon the Pequot by the English in 1634. See Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 242-244.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

<sup>98</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 61.

turn, the Company would receive a custom duty on all privately traded goods. The 1640 Freedoms and Exemptions Act did double the colony's population to 1,600, though several individuals only temporarily stayed and returned to the Dutch Republic after making a quick profit. A plan to limit trade only to residents was proposed in response, but was not passed until March 1648.

In 1639, Kieft launched a massive land-grab campaign in order to accommodate the new settlers. He purchased a large tract of land from the Rockaway Indians on Long Island that extended from shore to shore. Next, he purchased the remaining available lands in the Brooklyn area.<sup>99</sup> The purchase agreement for the Rockaway land included a stipulation that permitted the Rockaway groups to remain on their lands and “plant corn, fish, hunt and make a living there as well as they can.”<sup>100</sup> Kieft, it seems, perceived the Natives as more reliable agricultural producers than recently-arrived European colonists.

The Munsee, especially bands located on Long Island Sound and in close proximity to white and purple seashells, also tried to maintain their relevancy by supplying traders with wampum. Wampum remained the currency of exchange between the Dutch and indigenous traders near Fort Orange in the north.<sup>101</sup> However, over the course of the war, corn emerged as a more important trade good for the Dutch compared to wampum. Corn's scarcity and wampum's abundance ensured that the former had more real value than the latter. Before and during Kieft's War, both Dutch and indigenous officials freely offered wampum as payment for wrongs committed, but typically demanded corn, instead.

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<sup>99</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 60-65.

<sup>100</sup> “Indian Deed for Land on Long Island,” January 15, 1639, *DRCHNY* XIV, 15.

<sup>101</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 240-243.

Kieft's War officially began in September of 1643 after Kieft formally declared a state of war against "hostile" Natives.<sup>102</sup> Skirmishes, however, began several years earlier after Kieft issued his tribute demand on September 15, 1639.<sup>103</sup> The first of these skirmishes occurred in May 1640. Raritans, presumably anticipating the disintegration of trade relations, attempted to stave off Dutch intrusions through a botched attempt to capture a Company sloop that came to trade with them each spring. Shortly after their failed plot, colonists began to spread unsubstantiated rumors that the Raritan had killed livestock belonging to David de Vries and butchered several pigs in the care of an African slave. The Raritan denied these rumors and argued that the animals were killed by Company soldiers who, en route to the South River, "came ashore on Staten Island to cut wood and haul water, and then at the same time stole the hogs, and charged the act upon the innocent Indians."<sup>104</sup>

Kieft refused to let the actions and rumors surrounding the Raritan go unpunished, but what began as a diplomatic mission quickly turned deadly. On July 16, 1640, after the Natives refused Kieft's initial requests that the guilty parties be turned over, Kieft dispatched 80 men to the Raritan village. Secretary Cornelis van Tienhoven led the expedition but failed to reach an accord with the Raritan. The Raritan refused to turn over those responsible and instead promised to exact punishment on the guilty individuals themselves. Van Tienhoven relented, but his men refused to leave empty handed. After Van Tienhoven protested his soldiers' truculent demands, he departed. When he had traveled about a mile, his men opened fire, killed several Indians, burned their homes, and captured and brutally tortured the sachem's brother. Van Tienhoven

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<sup>102</sup> "Council Minutes," September 15, 1643, *DRNH* XIII, 16.

<sup>103</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 65.

<sup>104</sup> David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," September 1, 1640, 211. See also: Willem Frijhoff, *Fulfilling God's Mission*, 473.

attempted to deescalate the situation and offered the soldiers eighty fathoms of wampum if they released their prisoner.<sup>105</sup>

Ulrich Leopold and Jan Thomassen, later recounting these events to an Amsterdam notary, interpreted the skirmish as a response to Kieft's tribute. The two men testified that Kieft began a war with the Natives in September 1640 after he demanded that the Natives give him a *schepel* of maize each.<sup>106</sup> They continued that the Natives themselves took revenge the following summer.<sup>107</sup> During the summer of 1641, the Raritans exacted their revenge by killing four of De Vries's laborers (one Dutch and three English) and setting fire to his house and farm. Afterwards, the Raritan told a Indian who worked on De Vries's farm that they had "come to fight [the colonists] on account of [the Company's] men; that we had before come and treated them badly on account of the swine, that there had been laid to their charge what they were not guilty of."<sup>108</sup> Horror quickly spread amongst the colonists.<sup>109</sup>

In the midst of 1640's autumn harvest, David de Vries set sail aboard his sloop for Tappan. Upon disembarking, De Vries found another sloop belonging to the Company that he claimed had been sent "for the purpose of levying a contribution from the Indian Christians, of a quantity of corn." Interestingly, De Vries makes no mention of wampum or fur, the other two acceptable goods in Kieft's demands. De Vries himself had traveled across the Hudson "in order to trade for maize or Indian corn." After De Vries had clarified that he wished not to exact a tribute, but instead trade cloth for corn, the Tappan responded that they could not help him. The Tappan did

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 208; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 65-66.

<sup>106</sup> "Testimony of Ulrich Leopold and Jan Thomassen," July 28, 1643, SA, Notarial Archives, 5075.1628B.

<sup>107</sup> De Vries dated the event to September 1, 1641, see: David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," September 1, 1640, 211.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> "Ordinance," July 4, 1641, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*, 28-29; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 66. The wife of Joris Dircksen, a farmer on Staten Island, was left so afraid that she convinced her husband to leave Staten Island and move to Manhattan, see: "release by Cornelis Melyn of Joris Dircksen from his Contract to Live on Staten-Island," August 15, 1640, *DRCHNY XIII*, 8.

suggest, though, that “should the Company’s sloop in the mean time get away, they would then trade” with De Vries. The Tappan explained to De Vries that they were appalled by Kieft’s arrogance, believing “he must be a very mean fellow to come to live in this country without being invited by them, and now wish to compel them to give him their corn for nothing.” Corn that “they had not raised...in great abundance.” The limited amount of corn they had, one explained, owed to the fact that generally a chief determined the amount of corn, but this year only two women had planted corn and had only planted enough “for their own necessities, and to barter some with us for cloth.” While it is unclear why the chief had not directed the corn planting and why so few had planted corn, De Vries concluded, “this affair began to cause much dissatisfaction among the savages.”<sup>110</sup>

Kieft’s later responses to the Raritan skirmish and the Tappan’s refusal to pay tribute illustrate the importance, value, and scarcity of corn compared to wampum during this period. In order to protect the colony’s small population, Kieft and the Council decided to encourage alliances with friendly Natives who could guard against guerrilla attacks on the colony’s farms. To entice their support, Kieft offered “ten fathoms of Wampum for each head...and 20 fathoms of Wampum for every head of the indians who have most barbarously murdered our people on Staten Island.”<sup>111</sup> Reading these various events together – Kieft’s continuous demand for corn and quick offer of wampum – suggests that corn was scarce while wampum was abundant. This would become a common refrain throughout the five-year conflict. Wampum did retain some value, though, and at least a few indigenous groups took up Kieft’s offer. In early November, the leader of the Tankiteke, Pacham, brought “a dead hand hanging on a stick” to New Amsterdam

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<sup>110</sup> David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiae*,” October 20, 1640, 209.

<sup>111</sup> “Ordinance,” July 4, 1641, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*, 28-29.



and declared it belonged to “the chief who had killed or shot...our men on Staten Island.” These actions brought the conflict between the New Netherlanders and Raritans to a standstill.<sup>112</sup>

In the midst of the Raritan conflict, yet another conflict erupted. This time between the Dutch and the Wickquasgeck (alt. Wecquaesgeek) who lived just north of the Harlem River, in what is now Westchester, New York. Sometime in August 1641, a young Wickquasgeck man arrived at the home of Claes Smits Rademaker, a wheelwright residing along the Wickquasgeck Trail near Deutels Bay (present-day Turtle’s Bay in the East River).<sup>113</sup> The Wickquasgeck knocked on Rademaker’s door and engaged him under the pretense of trading some beaver pelts for duffel cloth. Rademaker agreed and as he went to unlock his chest containing the cloth, the Wickquasgeck grabbed a nearby axe and struck Rademaker in the back of the neck. The Wickquasgeck then, according to David de Vries, “stole all the goods and ran off.”<sup>114</sup>

Kieft sent an envoy to the Wickquasgeck to inquire about the causes of Rademaker’s death and request the surrender of the alleged murderer. The Wickquasgeck refused to hand over the perpetrator but did tell the envoy his purposes in killing Rademaker. Some fifteen to twenty years prior, the Wickquasgeck recounted, when the Dutch had first arrived, the perpetrator and his uncle had approached some Dutchmen in order to trade some beaver. The Dutchmen refused to trade and instead seized the Wickquasgeck’s uncle’s beavers and then killed him. At a young age,

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<sup>112</sup> David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*,” September 1, 1640, 211; Trelease, *Indian-Affairs*, 66. For standstill, see: “Articles submitted by the honorable director and council of New Netherland,” n.d., *New York Historical Manuscripts* IV, 126. David de Vries, in recounting the events of 1633-1643, calculates that one fathom of wampum equaled approximately four guilders, see: David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*,” July 20, 1643, 232. For more on the currency value of wampum, beaver, and Dutch guilders, see: Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 194-197.

<sup>113</sup> The Wickquasgeck Trail was carved into the wooded, brushy, and swampy landscape of Manhattan in order to connect New Amsterdam and Delaware-speaking traders. It is now the world-famous Broadway Avenue.

<sup>114</sup> David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*,” 1642, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 213.

the Wickquasgeck resolved that, “when he should group up, he would revenge that deed upon the Dutch, and since then he had seen no better chance to do so than with this Claes Rademaker.”<sup>115</sup>

The cause of Claes Smits’ death had little connection to extreme weather conditions or food scarcity, but the colony’s response clearly did. Kieft called a meeting of the citizenry to elect representatives who could discuss a proper response and ensure a certain level of public support going forward. By November 1641, this elected council, known as the Twelve Men, unanimously agreed that something should be done to punish the responsible party but agreed to continue “friendly relations,” especially in regard to the “maize trade.” They disagreed about how to achieve both goals. Ultimately, the Twelve Men delayed action until after the corn harvest “for the sake and security of our lives and cattle.”<sup>116</sup>

Kieft anxiously sought to exact revenge despite the Twelve Men’s cautionary advice for patience. On November 1, 1641, Kieft requested the Twelve Men’s permission to attack. They denied the request and again counseled patience. As the harsh winter of 1641-1642 set in, a tense and short-lived peace fell upon the Hudson Valley. In January 1642, with snow presumably still on the ground and ice floating along the Hudson River, Kieft again requested permission to attack. This time the Twelve Men agreed and charged Kieft with making the necessary preparations. In March, as the warmth of spring thawed New Netherland’s frosted fields, Ensign Hendrick van Dyck set out with eighty men to exact revenge. The expedition left under the cover of darkness in hopes of winning the element of surprise but got lost in the dense woods of the seventeenth-century Hudson Valley. It was not, however, a complete loss. The Wickquasgeck

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>116</sup> “Articles submitted by the honorable director and council of New Netherland,” n.d., *New York Historical Manuscripts* IV, 124-126; “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 275.

heard about the attempted attack and traveled to New Amsterdam later that spring in order to broker a peace deal with the Dutch.<sup>117</sup>

In the midst of tentative peace with the Raritan and Wickquasgeck, yet another conflict emerged, this time with the Hackensack. The Hackensack resided on the west side of the Hudson River near present-day Newark. In 1641, Meyndert Meyndertz established a colony known as Pavonia in the vicinity of the Hackensack. This was done despite objections from Kieft and without consent of the Hackensack, although the land had been purchased years prior. In addition to a disputed land deal, the Hackensack bore additional grievances. Pavonia settlers allowed their livestock to trample the Hackensack's corn fields and illegally sold watered-down brandy to the Natives. One particularly aggrieved Hackensack, supposedly the sachem's son, who had been intoxicated by the Dutch and then robbed, retaliated by killing Gerrit Jansz van Vorst, a Dutch colonist, while he thatched his roof. The Hackensack's leaders quickly moved to atone the murder and offered Van Vorst's widow one to two hundred fathom of wampum. Kieft rejected the offer and demanded the Hackensack surrender the culprit. Why Kieft refused to accept the wampum is unclear. It might indicate Kieft's insistence that the Hackensack follow European jurisprudence, but it might also demonstrate the limited value placed on wampum during this period. If the original 1639 tribute was really intended to increase the colonists' supply of wampum it is doubtful that Kieft would have refused the wampum outright. But as a result of Kieft's refusal, the matter remained unresolved. The Hackensack refused to turn over the alleged murderer and instead cast the blame on settlers who illegally sold alcohol to Natives.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," 1642, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 213; "Journal of New Netherland," 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 27; "Interrogatories to be proposed to Secretary Cornelis van Tienhoven," n.d., *DRCHNY I*, 199, 410; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 69-70.

<sup>118</sup> David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," 1642, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 215-216; "Journal of New Netherland," 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 276; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 70; Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 246.

Fear and anxiety spread through New Netherland as snow fell and skirmishes continued during the winter of 1642-1643. The Council reported in February that the Raritan, Wickquasgeck, and Hackensack, despite “all the friendship and kindness shown them” had continued to “wantonly kill many goats, hogs, cows and horses...and murdered...seven innocent men.”<sup>119</sup> Providentially, the colonists believed, God had brought punishment upon the Wickquasgeck. The Mahican, desiring to renew trade relations with the Dutch, attacked the Wickquasgeck, killed seventeen, and captured many women and children. Those who managed to escape “fled through a deep snow” in order to seek refuge amongst the Dutch.<sup>120</sup>

Nefariously, Kieft granted the refugees respite. For two weeks, the Company allowed the Wickquasgeck to rest unmolested. Upon returning to their homes, however, the Mahican once again attacked the Wickquasgeck. This time, the Wickquasgeck sought refuge at Corlaer's Hook on Manhattan and amongst the Hackensack across the Hudson. Several colonists realized the potential for revenge and petitioned Kieft “to attack the Indians as enemies, whilst God hatefully [sic] delivered them into our hands.”<sup>121</sup> Kieft agreed. After several weeks of planning, the Company launched two simultaneous assaults on the night of February 25 – one at Corlaer's Hook and the other at Pavonia. Over the next few days, an estimated eleven indigenous groups retaliated by “burning, looting, and murdering throughout the countryside.” The Netherlander’s bloody and vengeful attacks left somewhere between 80 and 120 dead and an additional 30 captured but failed to scare the Natives into submission.<sup>122</sup> Instead, the Company’s attacks incited additional, independent, and unsanctioned attacks against local indigenous groups.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> “Council Minutes,” February 27, 1643, *DRCHNY* XIII, 11

<sup>120</sup> “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 276-277.

<sup>121</sup> Trelease, *Indian-Affairs*, 71

<sup>122</sup> Trelease, *Indian-Affairs*, 73.

<sup>123</sup> David de Vries, one of the few who cautioned against outright warfare with the indigenous groups, ironically suffered some of the worst of the damages when Natives burnt his crops and buildings, see: David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiae*,” February 24, 1643, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 229.

The successful attacks on the Wickquasgeck and Hackensack encouraged colonists on Long Island to launch a similar assault. On February 27, 1643, they requested permission “to ruin and conquer” the Canarsee Indians with whom they shared the island. The Council denied their request, but stipulated that “in case they [Natives] evince a hostile disposition, every man must do his best to defend himself.” Several colonists were encouraged by the Council’s stated denial but implied approval and “attempted secretly with two waggons [sic] to steal maize from these Indians.” The Canarsee defended themselves and protected their desperately needed corn reserve following six years of drought and now a shorter, climate-induced growing season. Three Canarsee were shot and killed during the scuffle. In retaliation, the Canarsee set fire to two houses near Fort Amsterdam later calling from afar, “Be ye our friends? Ye are mere corn stealers.”<sup>124</sup>

Spring’s arrival ushered in a period of peace. The Dutch and the Natives understood the importance of spring as an end to the hunting season and the beginning of the planting season. If warfare continued, corn might go unplanted and any sprouts that sprung might be destroyed. Without a successful harvest, both sides faced malnourishment, famine, and potentially death. The Dutch signed peace or at least truce agreements with the Long Island bands as well as the Hackensack in March and April, respectively.<sup>125</sup>

Peace, however, would last only as long as corn was in the ground. Anticipating the autumn harvest, several younger members of the mainland tribes began to agitate for war and revenge. Their leaders tried to delay a conflagration until after the harvest and alerted the Dutch

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<sup>124</sup> “Extract from the Register of Resolutions,” February 25, 1643, *DRCHNYI*, 416-417; “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 277-278; Trelease, *Indian-Affairs*, 73. Maryn Adriaenzen, owner of one of the burnt houses, would retaliate not by attacking the Natives, but by attempted assassination of Kieft who he deemed ultimately responsible for the hostilities, see: “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 278.

<sup>125</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 74-75.

of a potential rogue attack. Kieft ordered a meeting with the leader of the truculent young men and ordered him to kill those “who wished to engage in a war with the [Dutch].” In exchange, Kieft offered him two hundred fathoms of [wampum].” Not surprisingly, the leader refused to kill his friends. He did, however, suggest that they might be willing to do so if Kieft had been willing to pay “richly for the murder.”<sup>126</sup> Once again Kieft offered, and Natives refused, the payment of wampum to prevent future atrocities.

Kieft’s War reached a tipping point on August 7, 1643, when the Wappinger who resided further north on the Hudson’s east side and had never before engaged in hostilities with the Dutch, fired the opening salvos of another Dutch-Indigenous conflict. The Wappinger had been provoked by Pacham, the same Tankiteke leader who had earlier brought Kieft the hand of the Raritan responsible for killing several Dutch colonists on Staten Island. Pacham had been traveling throughout the lower Hudson Valley, moving from village to village, in an effort to create a pan-Indian alliance that could collectively defeat the Dutch presence. Pacham successfully persuaded the Wappinger to join the effort. They killed or captured twelve colonists by attacking several boats that regularly traveled between Fort Orange and New Amsterdam.<sup>127</sup>

The pan-Indian alliance soon grew to include at least seven indigenous groups including the Wickquasgeck and Hackensack. Collectively, the pan-Indian alliance resumed hostilities later that fall after corn had ripened and been stored away. The Wickquasgeck attacked several families near New Rochelle and killed eighteen individuals including the infamous Anne Hutchinson who had been exiled from New England in 1638. The Hackensack attacked the bowery at Newark Bay on September 17. While those present escaped before being attacked, the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 75; David de Vries, “Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*,” July 20, 1643, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 232-233.

<sup>127</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 76.

bowery itself was destroyed. In October, the Tappan set fire to a farmhouse and several other houses near Pavonia. By year's end, nearly every Munsee band, except for the Long Island groups, were at war with the Dutch.<sup>128</sup>

Extreme weather, failed harvests, and repeated attacks by indigenous groups had weakened the Dutch presence in the lower Hudson River Valley by 1643. Farmers throughout the colony had abandoned their settlements and multiple families, fearing for their lives, left the colony completely. David de Vries, whose farm had twice been destroyed by Indian attacks, was amongst those leaving. The departures decreased the Company's force to about fifty to sixty able soldiers and 250 colonists. In contrast, the growing pan-Indian force stitched together by Pacham reached close to 1,500 warriors.<sup>129</sup>

Kieft worked frantically to grow the Company's force. In addition to reaching out to the Republic and New England for material support and receiving corn and fodder from New Haven to replace what the Natives destroyed, Kieft called for the formation of another advisory council. Kieft had disbanded the Twelve Men the year before over political disagreements, but with increasing hostilities, he once again sought the counsel of the citizenry. The resulting board, known as the Eight Men, met on September 15, 1643 and resolved to wage war against all hostile indigenous groups except for the Long Island bands. Recruits were rounded up, Dutch and English colonists and Company employees were armed and trained, and Captain John Underhill, the leader of the English attack on the Pequot village at Mystic River in May 1637, was enlisted to lead them all.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 77; David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," September 28 - October 1, 1643, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 233-234; Otto, *Dutch-Munsee Encounter*, 120.

<sup>129</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 77; David de Vries, "Excerpt from *Korte Historiael*," September 28, 1643, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 233.

<sup>130</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 76-78

The Dutch concentrated their efforts during the fall on improving their diminishing food supplies. One of the Eight Men forwarded a proposal to unload a ship laden with provisions that had been destined for Curaçao. In December, a Company expedition surveyed Staten Island and, after finding the local inhabitants had fled, stole four hundred bushels of corn and burned whatever they could not carry before returning to Manhattan. Two additional colonists, Barent Jansz and Hans Jansen, at around the same time requested permission to “take from Long Island some maize belonging to the Indians.” They canoed across the Hudson, but upon landing they “heard Indians, wherefore they did not bring back any maize.” Roelandt Hackbort testified to the same tune later upon his return to The Hague and declared that Kieft had sent them to retrieve any corn that had been left in the fields after the Indian harvest. Kieft, however, denied the accusation that he had anything to do with the provocation of the Long Island Natives who had maintained peace with the Dutch up to this point.<sup>131</sup>

Throughout the late fall of 1643 and early winter of 1644, Kieft’s military advisors directed their attacks primarily upon the Wickquasgeck. Company men only engaged enemies when it was clear they had the element of surprise or a superior force. And while the Dutch inflicted a few casualties upon the Wickquasgeck and at one point found and burned a sizable quantity of their winter corn supply, the Wickquasgeck eluded Dutch attacks at almost every turn.<sup>132</sup>

The Dutch grew frustrated at their failed attacks upon the Wickquasgeek and turned their attention toward the Canarsee on Long Island in February 1644. The Dutch believed that Penhawitz and his Canarsee band were at least partially responsible for a new round of killings

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<sup>131</sup> “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 280; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 77-78. My thanks to Jaap Jacobs for sharing the testimony of Roelandt Hakbord, see: “Declaration of Roelandt Hackbort, 45 years old, on request of Cornelis Melijn, over the Eruption of War with the Indians in 1643,” n.d., HG, 0372-01 262 fol. 024 024v 025.

<sup>132</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 78-79; “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 280-282.



and burnings on the island. An attacking force of 120 men split into two groups, engaged the Canarsee in at least two skirmishes, and killed about 120 Munsee.

The Company dealt the pan-Indian alliance a fatal blow the following month. In March 1644, Underhill and 130 men headed to modern-day Stamford, Connecticut to suppress the Tankiteke, the leaders of the pan-Indian movement.<sup>133</sup> The cold, snowy winter of 1643-1644 held its grip on the lower Hudson Valley long into March. When Underhill and his men landed their three yachts at Greenwich the “great snow and storm” forced them to hunker down and pass the night there. The next morning, they marched over snow-covered hills and at times the slippery, stony hills required that they crawl hand-over-foot. That night, when they were within a league of the Indian encampment, they were given two hours to sleep, but “the men could not afterwards rest in consequence of the cold.” At 10 o’clock, under a full moon, the order was given to push forward with the attack. What befell the Munsee that night bears startling similarity to the events of Fort Mystic.<sup>134</sup> Underhill and his men surrounded the encampment, descended upon the Munsee, and killed any who dared leave their homes. Nearly 180 Munsee were killed in the initial assault. Those Munsee remaining in their homes began to shoot arrows through holes. In response, Sergeant Major Van der Hil ordered the huts be set ablaze. The flames engulfed between five and seven hundred men, women, and children.<sup>135</sup>

Indigenous groups continued a limited campaign against New Netherland into the spring of 1644. They focused most of their attacks against the colony’s remaining livestock. The Council, in response, passed an ordinance at the end of March to construct a common pasture complete

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<sup>133</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 79-80; “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 282-283.

<sup>134</sup> Cave, *The Pequot War*, 147-154.

<sup>135</sup> “Journal of New Netherland,” 1647, *Narratives of New Netherland*, 282-284; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 79-80. The Munsee encampment was located near present-day Pound Ridge, Westchester County, New York. This was home to the Tankiteke or Siwanoy, but at least 25 Wappinger were also present that day, present for festival celebrations.

with fence and palisade for protection. Anyone who helped in the construction of the fence could use the clearing to protect their remaining livestock from Indian attacks.<sup>136</sup>

The Dutch show of force against the Tankiteke and the arrival of the spring planting season ushered in a conclusion to this round of hostilities. On April 6, Kieft and four indigenous groups met near Pound Ridge and agreed to end hostilities. A little over a week and a half later, a similar peace was made with several Long Island groups. The Canarsee, Rockaway, Raritan, Hackensack, Wickquasgeck, Wappinger, and other local groups, however, were not interested in peace. As soon as their maize had been harvested and stored, “they began to murder our people [and]...continually rove around in parties, night and day,...killing our people not a thousand paces from the Fort.”<sup>137</sup>

The war’s toll weighed heavy on all groups by the summer of 1644. Colonists had never fully recovered from the earlier drought episodes and combined with the on-going war, many simply packed up and left. In 1644, the farms “lie fallow and waste; our dwellings and other buildings are burnt; not a handful can be planted or sown this fall on all the abandoned places.” So few farmers remained and those who did were so fearful of being attacked that “the crop, which God the Lord permitted to come forth during the past summer, remains on the field, as well as the hay, standing and rotting in divers places; whilst we poor people have not been able to obtain a single man for our defense.” In a letter to the West India Company the Eight Men complained that the Indians were left free to catch fish unmolested while colonists dared not “move a foot to fetch a stick of fire wood without an escort.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> “Ordinance,” March 31, 1644, *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*, 37-38.

<sup>137</sup> “Letter from the Eight Men to the Amsterdam Chamber,” October 28, 1644. *DRCHNYI*, 210-211; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 80-81.

<sup>138</sup> “Letter from the Eight Men to the Amsterdam Chamber,” October 28, 1644. *DRCHNYI*, 210-211.

Kieft's desperation for food in 1644 made itself evident in his response to a petition by eleven Company slaves who sought their freedom after eighteen or nineteen years of service. The slaves argued that they had served the Company long enough and could not support their families while remaining enslaved. Kieft agreed to set them free, but only under three conditions. First, each person would be required to pay the Company thirty *schepels* of maize, grain, or other agricultural products and a pig valued at twenty guilders each year for the rest of their lives. If they failed to do so, they would be returned to the Company's service. Second, if the Company ever required their service in the future, they would be obligated to return to service. And finally, their born and unborn children would be bound to the Company's service. While these conditions have perplexed scholars in the past, the ongoing drought and food scarcity can partly account for Kieft's unprecedented move.<sup>139</sup>

The colonists felt a mild relief when the *Blauwen Haen* arrived from Curaçao in July 1644, carrying at least 130 soldiers who had earlier been forced out of Maranhão. The colony's leaders made grand plans to put the recently-arrived soldiers to use in destroying the Natives' crops so as to strip them of their winter supply. The plan, however, was never put into effect. Instead, the Eight Men and Kieft passed the summer bitterly fighting over financial matters and ultimate responsibility for the colony's precarious position.<sup>140</sup>

The Company's Board of Directors entered into a series of discussion regarding New Netherland's future after hearing news and complaints about the war.<sup>141</sup> In December, they decided that the best course of action was to recall Director Willem Kieft, require him to testify

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<sup>139</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 383-384.

<sup>140</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 81; "Letter from the Eight Men to the Amsterdam Chamber," October 28, 1644, *DRCHNY I*, 209-210.

<sup>141</sup> The Company mainly petitioned the State for additional assistance, see: "Letter from Amsterdam Chamber to the States General," April 5, 1644, *DRCHNY I*, 141-142.

and justify his actions, and replace him with a new director. They stated Kieft's replacement must be "endowed with sufficient qualities to promote, on the one side, the interests of the Company and the welfare of the Commonalty, and to maintain, on the other, good correspondence with the neighboring people, and especially with the Indians."<sup>142</sup> They would find such a suitable replacement in Peter Stuyvesant, although he would not arrive to New Netherland for another two years.<sup>143</sup>

Peace arrived in the spring and summer of 1645. In April, several unnamed indigenous groups arrived at New Amsterdam ready to bring an end to hostilities. In August, after Kieft returned from a treaty mission at Fort Orange, several additional local groups made moves towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In late August, Kieft and representatives from the Hackensack, Tappan, Canarsee, and Wappinger along with mediators and ambassadors from the Mohawk and Mahican nations, gathered at Fort Amsterdam and agreed to end hostilities.<sup>144</sup> The colony announced a day of thanksgiving in early September to celebrate the "long desired peace" with the Natives.<sup>145</sup> It seemed, at last, that peace prevailed.

Kieft remained in New Netherland until Stuyvesant's arrival in May 1647. Upon Stuyvesant's arrival, Kieft and many of the soldiers who had been forced out of Maranhão three years earlier boarded the *Princes Amelia* and headed back to the Netherlands. Though, many never reached home as most drowned after the boat crashed off the coast of Wales in September 1647.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> "Report of the Board of Accounts on New Netherland," December 15, 1644, *DRCHNY I*, 153.

<sup>143</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 82.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83. For peace treaties, see: "Articles of Peace Concluded in the Presence of the Mohawks Between the Dutch and the River-Indians," August 30, 1645, *DRCHNY XIII*, 18.

<sup>145</sup> "Council Minute: Proclamation to be Issued Ordering a Day of Thanksgiving to be Observed on Account of the Peace with the Indians," August 31, 1645, *DRCHNY XIII*, 19.

<sup>146</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 249.

Extreme weather catalyzed and exacerbated, though did not cause, the violence of Kieft's War. Instead, extreme weather events created a situation that beckoned human responses. Kieft, an inexperienced director who was appointed as a result of nepotism, proved unwilling to learn or participate in Munsee traditions of diplomacy and chose to respond to the mounting subsistence crisis with demands and violence. Indigenous leaders attempted to respond through traditional means and methods of diplomacy. They offered wampum to right wrongs and relied upon their own jurisprudence to punish rogue members. Yet, because of Kieft's insistence on exerting his power and Dutch sovereignty, indigenous peoples also turned to violence.

### 13. Aftermath

Peter Stuyvesant's arrival to New Netherland ushered in a period of growth and prosperity. New colonists arrived, settlers purchased additional Native land, and the colony's character firmly shifted from a place of trade to a home for settlement. Yet, even the infamous Peter Stuyvesant could not control the weather or the consequences of colonists' desire for more Indian land. Extreme weather and land disputes continued to plague the Hudson Valley throughout the mid-seventeenth century and catalyzed several additional conflicts with indigenous peoples. In 1655 and again between 1659 and 1663, the colony fell into episodes of colonial violence.

Climate reconstructions for the Hudson Valley suggest that New Netherland's weather continued to fluctuate between extremes following the end of Kieft's War. Drought struck the colony again between 1647 and 1651 as well as between 1661 and 1667.<sup>147</sup> The years 1648, 1649, 1661, and 1662 were especially dry.<sup>148</sup> Cold La Niña conditions possibly returned in 1654 and 1663.<sup>149</sup>

The drought of 1647-1651 led to tense relations between Natives and colonists. In 1647, the Company once again suspended the collection of tenths. Then in 1649 and again in 1653, poor harvests led the colony's administrators to ban grain exports, the use of grains in bread backed for Natives, and grain's use for brewing beer.<sup>150</sup> At least on one occasion, the decreased grain supply led colonists to revert to their old habit of stealing maize from their indigenous neighbors.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> See supplemental table 3 in Pederson et al., "Is an Epic Pluvial Masking the Water Insecurity of the Greater New York City Region?" 1339–54.

<sup>148</sup> "Grid Point 267," Data Set, *North American Drought Atlas*, (2004).

<sup>149</sup> Gergis and Fowler, "A History of ENSO Events since A.D. 1525."

<sup>150</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 221, 245.

<sup>151</sup> "Council Minutes," July 16, 1647, *New York Historical Manuscripts IV*, 395, 398, 406; "Council Minutes," July 22, 1647, *New York Historical Minutes IV*, 411; "Council Minutes," July 23, 1647, *New York Historical Minutes IV*, 420.

On September 15, 1655, a conflict erupted between Dutch colonists and several allied Native groups including members of the Susquehannock, Wappinger, and Esopus. The origins of the conflict have been traced to colonist Hendrick Van Dijck's alleged murder of an Indian woman. Van Dijck shot the woman after he found her trespassing upon his orchard and picking peaches earlier that year. The conflict came to be known as the "Peach War" in reference to the alleged incident. The woman's murder prompted a contingent of nearly one-thousand Natives to attack New Amsterdam. The colony was especially vulnerable at the time. Most of the colony's soldiers were traveling south to subdue a rogue Swedish colony. The Natives arrived under the pretext of searching for "Northern Indians," but quickly targeted and wounded the alleged murderer Van Dijck. By the end of what became a three-day attack, 50 to 100 colonists were dead and 100 captured, nine to twelve thousand bushels of grain were set ablaze, five to six hundred cattle killed, and countless farms and settlements burned and evacuated at Pavonia and Staten Island.

Diplomatic negotiations to restore peace began shortly after. Dutch leaders and representatives from various River Indian groups including the Hackensack, Massapeguas, Matinecocks, Secatogues, Merricks, Rockaways, and Canarsees were eager to bring an end to the hostilities. Everyone feared a repeat of Kieft's War. Three additional colonists were killed, though, before hostilities came to a close in 1657. The final peace treaty called for an exchange of presents and prisoners between the Dutch and various Native groups involved.<sup>152</sup>

The Peach War followed the especially cold La Niña winter of 1654-1655. Apparently, that winter the Hudson's ice floes had enough force to knock down Fort New Amsterdam's wooden

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<sup>152</sup> For a discussion regarding Native explanations for the attack, see: Robert S. Gumet, *The Munsee Indians: A History* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 70-72. For an overview of the war's casualties, see: Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 139. For death of three colonists in 1657, see: Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 147.

palisades. We know this because the Company later punished colonist Hendrick Jansen Grever for illegally hauling off the palisades to use as fire wood. The Lord's High Councilors, in determining punishment for Grever's offense, took pity on him and lessened their punishment owing to the "sharp and bitter cold" and complete consumption of wood in the Guard House.<sup>153</sup> This was an especially harsh winter. January's cold temperatures froze numerous rivers including the East River and left nearly all roads snow packed which made it "hardly possible to travel anywhere by water or land."<sup>154</sup> Additional textual sources suggest farmers probably experienced a poor harvest in 1655 and possibly in 1654. In both years, Stuyvesant and his Council convinced the Company's directors to suspend the collection of tenths.<sup>155</sup>

Better weather prevailed during the Peach War itself. Although, stable weather holds its own detrimental potential. During the war, Natives targeted a small colony on Staten Island established by Godard van Reede as a *patroonship* in 1641. While management and ownership of the *patroonship* changed hands on several occasions, by 1655 the colony had increased to about ninety people spread out across eleven farms. The influx of settlers and farmers in the region – all of which were seduced by promises of agricultural fertility – encroached on Indian lands. In response, Natives attacked and completely ruined the colony in order to curb its growth. Several colonists escaped the attack by fleeing to Manhattan, but fifteen were killed. None, however, would return.<sup>156</sup>

Two final conflicts took place further north on the Hudson between newly-settled colonists and the Esopus. The First and Second Esopus Wars (1658-1660; 1662-1664) played out half-way

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<sup>153</sup> "Sentence of Hendrick Jansen Grever for Cutting Palisades," 1655, *New York Historical Manuscripts VI*, 5.

<sup>154</sup> "Council Minutes Concerning Threats from New England," January 27, 1655, *New York Historical Manuscripts VI*, 9.

<sup>155</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 221.

<sup>156</sup> Jacobs, *Colony of New Netherland*, 73.



between Manhattan and Fort Orange.<sup>157</sup> The Dutch deemed the Esopus' land as "splendid country" and fertile enough to "feed the whole of New Netherland."<sup>158</sup> The conflicts' causes have been traced to the establishment of Dutch farms, cultural misunderstandings regarding land contracts, increased trade in alcohol, and a desire to trade cloth with the Esopus in exchange for maize and wild game. Colonists first began purchasing land in this fertile region in 1653 following news of a peace treaty between the Iroquois and the French. The peace treaty might have assuaged colonists' fears of hostilities, but the reality of European transgressions on Native land became apparent in 1658.

During the spring of 1658, several dozen colonists, who had left the region in 1655 in fear that the Peach War might spread north, returned to Esopus to resume farming. Within weeks of their return, an intoxicated Native killed one of the settlers, attacked several livestock, and set fire to two farm houses.<sup>159</sup> Stuyvesant hastily rode to the region to oversee a peaceful resolution to the conflict. He brought along fifty to sixty soldiers as a precautionary measure. When he arrived, he denied the settlers' requests for war, urged them to create a more compact settlement so as not to infringe upon Native land, and offered them Company resources to do so. The colonists did as told and began construction of a new fort they named Wiltwijck (Indian Town). During meetings with Native leaders, Stuyvesant threatened war but cautioned peace. He urged the Esopus to sell their land and move inland so as to avoid future conflict. The Esopus agreed to the sale but requested an exchange of gifts as per their diplomatic traditions. Stuyvesant agreed to the exchange and received approval from the Company to do so, but by May 1659, the Esopus

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<sup>157</sup> For an overview of the two Esopus Wars, see: Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 148-168.

<sup>158</sup> Quoted in Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 253.

<sup>159</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 148; Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 72.

had not received the promised gifts rendering the compromise and sale of land mute in their minds.<sup>160</sup>

A second round of hostilities began in September after colonists began moving into the newly completed fort of Wiltwijck. A group of Esopus had received a bottle of brandy for a day's labor in the fields of Thomas Chambers and had retreated into the woods near Wiltwijck to enjoy it. When the gathering's noise reached a level audible to nearby colonists, Jacob Jansen Stoll decided to intervene to break up the Natives. Upon reaching the group, now numbering only five, the colonists opened fire, killed one Native, and took another captive. Over the next twenty-three days, five-hundred Natives responded to the unwarranted attack by attacking the village at Wiltwijck, killing livestock, and burning buildings.<sup>161</sup>

News of the attack reach New Amsterdam in late September just as additional news arrived that a group of settlers had been attacked and killed by Raritan and Navasink warriors at Maspeth (located across the East River from Manhattan).<sup>162</sup> Stuyvesant juggled which threat to respond to and decided to organize a force of 150 Dutch, English, and Long Island Natives to respond to the unfolding crisis in Esopus. When they arrived, they found the Esopus had retreated a day and a half earlier. Diplomatic negotiations began over the winter with both sides unwilling to attack during the difficult winter season. The Company's indigenous allies reported that the Esopus were waiting to attack until they could organize a sizable pan-Indian alliance. Stuyvesant believed this news justified a war, but wanted to wait until spring when supply ships were expected to arrive. "There is no question," Stuyvesant declared, "that if the countrymen in a new country cannot plough, sow and harvest without being molested, or the citizen and trader may

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 151-152.

<sup>162</sup> Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 73.

not travel unhindered on streams and rivers, they will both leave and transport themselves to such a government and dwelling places, where they shall be better protected.”<sup>163</sup> In the interim, Dutch-indigenous trade in venison, corn, and other provisions in exchange for wampum continued.<sup>164</sup>

Stuyvesant’s primary reasons to delay a formal declaration of war rested on his need for additional supplies. He was not alone in his precautions. Cornelis van Ruyven, secretary of the province, wanted to wait on declaring war until after the August and September harvests. Stuyvesant wanted to wait until horses, money, and African slaves that might be used as laborers or soldiers during a war could be sent up from Curaçao.<sup>165</sup> In the meantime, the Council established peace agreements with various local indigenous groups including western Long Island groups, the Hackensack, Nyack, Haverstraw, Wecquaesgeek, and other River Indians in order to ensure their loyalty or neutrality during a war.<sup>166</sup>

The peace agreements had the effect of isolating the Esopus.<sup>167</sup> In March, through a Wappinger intermediary, the Esopus signaled their desire for peace. The Dutch, however, accused the Esopus of false pretense and believed they were trying to seduce the Dutch into a false sense of security in order to stage a surprise attack. On March 24, 1660, after declaring a day of fasting, prayer, and meditation, Stuyvesant declared war on the Esopus.<sup>168</sup>

Ensign Dirk Smith organized the brunt of Dutch attacks on the Esopus while headquartered in Wiltwijck. During the spring, he ordered several raids that left many Esopus dead or captured,

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<sup>163</sup> Quoted in Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 154.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 153-155

<sup>165</sup> “Extract from a Letter from Peter Stuyvesant to Vice-Director of Curaçao,” February 17, 1660, *DRCHNY* XIII, 142-143.

<sup>166</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 156.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 74.

provisions destroyed, and the Esopus desirous of a new round of peace talks.<sup>169</sup> Stuyvesant would not hear of peace, though. Instead, he sent eleven of the captured Esopus to Curaçao as slaves. He only agreed to peace talks after news arrived that one of the Company's raids had killed Preuwamakan, the most prominent Esopus leader.

Peace talks began in June with Oratamin, the Hackensack leader, and other Native leaders who petitioned on behalf of the Esopus. A delegation of Dutch, Mohawk, Mahican, Susquehanna, Catskill, Wappinger, Hackensack, and Esopus leaders and representatives hashed out the final terms between July 14 and 15, 1660. Stuyvesant demanded that the Esopus remove themselves from the region, return any prisoners, maintain peace, and surrender a large amount of corn to the Company for damages incurred during the conflict.<sup>170</sup> The other Native leaders agreed to act as surety for the Esopus and pledged themselves to the Dutch if any future hostilities erupted.<sup>171</sup> Finally, Stuyvesant refused to return the Esopus enslaved in Curaçao. He wanted to hold them there until the Esopus showed their willingness to obey the Dutch. Stuyvesant's decision to hold several Esopus captive as slaves in Curaçao irritated the Esopus who had agreed to all of Stuyvesant's demands. During the summer of 1661, Esopus and Iroquois diplomats urged Stuyvesant to return them. In 1662, Stuyvesant finally agreed to return two of the nine.<sup>172</sup>

European settlers in Wiltwijck, after nearly two years without incident and perhaps naïve about the anger boiling within nearby Esopus peoples, decided to branch out and establish a new

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> "Letter from Peter Stuyvesant to Ensign Smith," December 11, 1659, *DRCHNY* XIII, 128-129. Stuyvesant also demanded that the Company "show them [the Indians] much kindness. His motive appears to be an effort to maintain trade relations, including trade in food. Ensign Smith wrote that "I speak fair to them that they shall bring us some venison or maize, buy they bring us little and our storehouse is not well provided with bacon and meat for 70 men, but we hope, that with a change of the weather we shall receive sufficient victuals," see: "Letter from Ensign Smith at Esopus to Vice-Director Lamontagne at Fort Orange," February 5, 1660, *DRCHNY* XIII, 135.

<sup>171</sup> Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 75; Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 158-159.

<sup>172</sup> Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 76-77.

village during the spring of 1662. They called the settlement Nieuwdorp – literally “new village.” In response, the Esopus threatened the villagers in the spring of 1663 and then directly attacked both settlements on June 7, 1663. During the attacks, Nieuwdorp was destroyed, Wiltwijck was nearly burnt away, twenty settlers were killed, and forty-five more were captured.

Stuyvesant responded swiftly. He asked Mohawk and Mahican intermediaries to negotiate for the settlers’ release, met with Lower River peoples to ensure their neutrality, and sent a sizable force of settlers and Natives under the command of Marten Kregier to defend the settlers. When the force arrived and found the supposed center of the Esopus force abandoned, they spent several days setting fire to crops and provisions before torching everything. Kregier retreated to Wiltwijck and from there sent out several patrols to locate the Esopus. Early in September, a patrol located a newly constructed Esopus fort. The Netherlands managed a surprise attack. They burned what they could, captured nineteen and killed thirty Natives, and liberated twenty-three settlers. The attack brought the Esopus to their heels and they quickly agreed to a truce. In the following months, a few isolated attacks left a few settlers dead, but all sides agreed to abide by the truce. Both sides hammered out a final peace treaty on May 15, 1664.<sup>173</sup>

The Esopus Wars can be directly attributed to Dutch incursion on Native land and alcohol-induced violence, but the wars were not free of ecological or climatological contexts. On several occasions, the Dutch remarked that heavy winds, floods, and high water thwarted their efforts to attack and pursue fleeing Esopus.<sup>174</sup> During the winter of 1660-1661, a case of smallpox broke out in New Amsterdam. Indigenous couriers, carrying news of the epidemic north to Fort Orange in January, also inadvertently carried the virus. The resulting outbreak devastated the Susquehannocks. A separate outbreak erupted amongst lower Delaware River Natives in 1663,

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>174</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 153, 158.

spread northward, reached the Susquehannocks once again, and from there spread to the Seneca and other Iroquois further west.<sup>175</sup> Just as during Kieft's War, extreme weather did not cause the Esopus Wars but instead exacerbated the impact of war and its attacks on people, livestock, and crops.

Stuyvesant, in his 1662 Thanksgiving Proclamation, deftly summarized the collective experiences of those who called New Netherland home.<sup>176</sup>

[God] has chastised us in some instances with pestilence and hitherto unknown fevers and diseases; again with sudden heavy rains and floods of water in the summer, by which the promising harvest was rendered unfruitful to the inhabitants; again by severe drought, by reason of which the fruits of the field were greatly injured and nearly cut off; and also by other trials. But at the same time, as a merciful and compassionate Father, he has remembered his loving kindness in the midst of judgements, blessing this province in general, and many of its inhabitants in particular...Among these may be numbered...the healing and removal of the...unusual diseases and fevers, the continuation of peace and quietness amid so many enemies with the prevailing rumors of new commotions and violence, and the renewed supply of a good and fruitful harvest.<sup>177</sup>

God's favor, however, would not last forever. Less than two years after Stuyvesant's Proclamation, on September 8, 1664, he would be forced to cede the colony to the English. Though the colony would retain its Dutch character for decades to come and many argue it is still shaped by its Dutch past, New Netherland slowly gave way to New York.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Grumet, *The Munsee Indians*, 79.

<sup>176</sup> Trelease, *Indian Affairs*, 148-150.

<sup>177</sup> "Proclamation of Peter Stuyvesant appointing a Day of Thanksgiving, Fasting and Prayer for March 15, 1662," January 26, 1662, *Ecclesiastical Records, State of New York I*, 516-518.

<sup>178</sup> The Netherlands would once again claim temporary hold of the colony in 1673-1674, though they would officially cede New Netherland back to the English in exchange for Surinam in 1674 at the Treaty of Westminster.

## Part V: Conclusion

“From Jakarta of yore began the victory; From the conquered Recife the defeat” - C.R. Boxer<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Boxer, *The Dutch in Brazil*, 245.

## 14. The Decline of the Dutch West India Company

The effects of climate changes and extreme weather events rippled throughout the seventeenth century's increasingly global trade networks. The Dutch Empire was no exception. Its formation created a vast network of people, policies, and practices to govern a vast overseas empire that stretched from the Dutch East India Company in Jakarta to the Dutch West India Company in Brazil. Expectations and doubts surrounded the Dutch West India Company at its inception, but by 1645, the Company's grand ambitions began to crumble in the face of financial insolvency exacerbated by extreme weather and indigenous resistance.

The Dutch West India Company had fallen into financial disarray as early as the 1640s when they eagerly pushed to expand their American footprint and increased their involvement in the African slave trade. Profit gained at the expense of African slaves, however, could not pull the Dutch West India Company out of bankruptcy.<sup>2</sup> In 1674, the States General dissolved the Company and formed a new company, shed of its predecessor's debts and unprofitable purposes. The First Dutch West India Company had been established as an administrative unit for overseas trade colonies and had been deeded the war-making powers of a state. In contrast, the Second Company shed its predecessor's administrative, settlement, and military responsibilities and instead focused on the commercial enterprises of the slave trade and commodities like gold and ivory.<sup>3</sup>

The 1640s marked a significant watershed moment in the history of Dutch colonialism in the Americas. This decade marked the Company's territorial zenith.<sup>4</sup> Over the next two decades

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<sup>2</sup> Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Den Heijer, "The West African Trade of the Dutch West India Company, 1674-1740," in *Riches from Atlantic Commerce*, 141-142. For an overview of goods traded between the Dutch Republic and West Africa, see pp. 151-159. The Second West India Company management structure was also reorganized. The board was reduced from 19 to 10 and the number of directors for each chamber was cut in half, see: Henk den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company," 99-100.

<sup>4</sup> Knaap et al., *Oorlog en Overzee*, 288.



the Company lost its trade, settlement, and plantation colonies and shifted focus towards the prioritization of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This transition culminated in the 1674 dissolution of the First West India Company and its replacement with the Second West India Company.

Scholars have offered a variety of economic interpretations to explain the decline of the First West India Company and the origins of the Second West India Company. Historian Jonathan Israel dated the beginning of the Company's decline to as early as 1641. According to his analysis, the 1641 truce between the Netherlands and Portugal that came as a result of Portugal's revolt against Spain forced the Company to cease its territorial expansion in Brazil. The Company's share prices temporarily increased following the news of Portugal's success against Spain, but fell as news of truce negotiations spread. The truce also brought an end to the Company's campaign to wrench the sugar trade away from a Portuguese monopoly. The Company downsized its naval fleet and dismissed most of its troops in 1641 as a cost-savings measure. The renewal of Portuguese competition pushed sugar prices and the Company's share prices down. The Portuguese Planters' Revolt (1645-1654) dealt a final blow to the Company's share prices. By 1646, the Company's shares were trading at 37% of their nominal value, by 1650 they were down to 14%, and by 1654 they were worth practically nothing. This led Israel to conclude that "the year 1646 stands out as a turning-point in the Company's assessment of its role in the Dutch world-trading system. It was then that the directors accepted the transformation of the Company from a trading war-machine into a non-belligerent commercial organization content to supply the colonies of other powers and relying for protection of its own modest assortment of territories on the States General."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade*, 167-170. For share prices, see: Jan De Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 402.

Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude have placed the demise of the Company more squarely upon Company mismanagement and poor financial oversight. Their assessment suggests the Company's decisions in 1638 and 1648 to liberalize Atlantic trade – first opening trade to shareholders willing to pay a fee to the Company and then later to anyone willing to pay the fees – substantially decreased the percentage of trade goods the Company could capture. The Planters' Revolt then compounded the losses incurred through this liberal trade policy. Portuguese planters racked up approximately 5 million guilders of debt by purchasing slaves on credit from the Company and private traders prior to the war. These debts went largely unpaid and the only restitution came in 1661 as part of a compensation plan laid out by the Dutch Republic that allowed Portugal to keep the Company's lost territories in Brazil.<sup>6</sup>

Henk den Heijer has identified an additional financial constraint that led to the Company's demise. The high debts incurred over the Company's early years together with outstanding debt obligations owed to the Company by outlying provinces to the tune of 6.5 million guilders required the Company to enter into risky financial funding mechanisms. The Company issued bonds and took out expensive maritime insurance policies known as bottomry to finance overseas voyages. Bottomry lending involved taking an advance from a lender to outfit a ship. In the event of a shipwreck, the lender would lose his investment, but upon a successful return voyage, the directors had to pay back the initial loan and interest as high as 50%. While this worked as short-term financing solution it led to long-term indebtedness.<sup>7</sup>

In Mark Meuwese's estimation, the foremost scholar of Dutch-indigenous relations in the Americas, the decline of the Company rests once again with the Company itself. Meuwese's

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 401-402.

<sup>7</sup> Henk den Heijer, "The Dutch West India Company," 97-100. For financial compensation, see: Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 47.

central argument is that the Company's successes were the result of positive diplomatic relations and military alliances with the Native peoples of the Americas. Yet, Meuwese ultimately concludes that Company mismanagement and public pressures in the Republic led to the loss of Brazil and to the Company's demise. The Company's financial situation prevented them from sending desperately needed troop reinforcements to Brazil and the conflict motivated wealthy Amsterdam investors and merchants to call for an end to hostilities and the renewal of trade with Portugal.<sup>8</sup>

The bulk of these interpretations have rested on Eurocentric and economic interpretations. From this perspective, the onus of the Company's failure is placed on its structural and financial woes. While recognizing the importance of these issues, examining events in the Americas through an indigenous and climatological lens reveals that the failures of sound fiscal responsibility at home reached across the Atlantic and had profound effects on the ability of Company servants to respond to internal threats.<sup>9</sup> The inability of the Company to provide steady supplies to the colonies together with extreme weather events left Company magazines in sober states and their conquest vulnerable to attack. In many ways, the inability of the Company to respond to these attacks led to its eventual demise.

The Company's 1623 "Grand Design," despite its fits and starts, marched Company forces across the Americas until 1641 when climate-induced indigenous resistance movements halted the Company's advances. The attacks of the *Brasilianen* on Maranhão beginning in 1642 eventually pushed the Company to abandon that region in 1644, incited a colony-wide revolt, and forced the Company's full retreat from Brazil in 1654. In the Hudson Valley, four conflicts between the region's Native and European inhabitants (Kieft's War, the Peach, and the two

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<sup>8</sup> Meuwese, *Brothers in Arms*, 43-48.

<sup>9</sup> For poor Company management in the Netherlands, see: Boxer, *The Dutch Brazil*, 175.

Esopus Wars) continually threatened the settlement colony until an English invasion in 1664 forced Peter Stuyvesant to cede the colony. And the Company came close to losing Curaçao to the Spanish during a prolonged drought and an indigenous resistance movement between 1637 and 1644.

Despite seventeenth-century perceptions that the Company would meet little indigenous resistance in the Americas due to declining Native populations, the Dutch in fact met indigenous resistance on multiple occasions in multiple locations.<sup>10</sup> And the impact of these resistance movements was great. The cumulative climate-induced indigenous resistance movements thus posed an existential, ideological, and financial threat to the Dutch Republic's future in the Americas. The indigenous resistance movements in Dutch Brazil, Curaçao, and New Netherland – all the consequence of extreme weather events, individual and institutional responses, and poor provisioning – ultimately altered the Company's plans for the Americas. By the 1660s, the Company was well on its way to becoming a dominate player in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The Company's involvement in the African slave trade began shortly after it was initially chartered and decades before receiving the 1662 *asiento* contract. Private merchants had visited West Africa as early as the 1590s and small companies were subsequently created to facilitate trade with Africa.<sup>11</sup> The Company's acquisition of northern Brazil in 1630 ignited Dutch interest in the slave trade. The large sugar plantations of Brazil, initially established by the Portuguese, required a vast supply of cheap labor that the region's Native population could not fulfill and the Company's policies forbid. The demand for African labor and the Company's involvement in the

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<sup>10</sup> Jaap Jacobs and L. H. Roper, *The Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2014), 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 16.

slave trade increased the following decade when sugar cultivation spread outwards onto various Caribbean islands.<sup>12</sup>

The Company's first forays into the trade occurred between 1625 and 1637 when it captured several Portuguese forts in the Senegambia region and established trading factories along the Gold Coast.<sup>13</sup> The Company then went on to capture São Jorge da Mina (Elmina), Angola, and São Tomé as part of its "Grand Design" between 1637 and 1642. The Portuguese, however, succeeded in recapturing Angola and São Tomé in 1648 leaving the Dutch embedded in the Gold Coast alone. Despite these territorial losses, the Company continued to involve itself as a middleman in the slave trade.

Curaçao emerged as a key entrepôt in the Company's slave trade operations. By 1713, the Company had shipped 62,500 slaves to the Spanish-American mainland by way of Curaçao.<sup>14</sup> Slaves first arrived to the island in the sixteenth century during its Spanish occupation, but Dutch records make no mention of any slaves still living on the island at the time of the Spanish-Dutch transition in 1634. The fate of earlier slaves is unclear, but most of the remaining slaves were probably taken to the Spanish-American mainland prior to the Company's takeover. Slaves, however, did find themselves back on the island shortly thereafter. The means by which they were forcibly placed on the island varied. Some were accompanied by Sephardic Jews who intended to make a home on the island while others arrived as a result of Dutch privateering and the seizure of Iberian vessels. Regardless of the means by which they arrived, by the 1640s at least forty slaves lived on Curaçao. The island's directors, including Van Walbeeck, Tolck, and Stuyvesant, all petitioned for shipments of slaves to the island during their tenures. It was not,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Den Heijer, "The West African Trade," 141.

<sup>14</sup> This accounted for 39.9% of the total slaves imported by the Dutch into the Americas, see: Den Heijer, "The West African Trade," 161.

however, until the 1650s that the Company seized on Curaçao's geographical advantages and established it as a slave trade port.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to Curaçao, slightly fewer slaves (60,800 or 38.8%) found themselves destined for Dutch Suriname between 1674 and 1740.<sup>16</sup> The Dutch formally received Suriname from the English in 1667 during the Treaty of Breda in which the Dutch Republic officially recognized the earlier English conquest over New Netherland in 1664. The Dutch Republic had grand plans for Suriname after losing so much of their American enterprise in the preceding decades. As historian Wim Klooster describes it, Suriname was “the last convulsions of Dutch Atlantic ambitions.”<sup>17</sup> The winning of Suriname from its indigenous peoples, however, proved difficult. In 1678, despite over a decade of peace, war broke out between the Dutch and an allied force of Arawak and Carib Natives. The Dutch governor of Suriname, Johannes Heinsius, succeeded in putting an end to the conflict by turning the traditional Native enemies, now allies, back against one another and selling many captured Natives into slavery. What caused the conflict is still unclear, although renewed interest in Suriname by historians such as Suze Zijlstra will certainly bring clarity to the conflict's origins. As the story unfolds, close attention should be paid to the conflict's climatological context. In 1679, Heinsius complained frequently about the hot days and cold nights that caused much unpleasantness, additionally remarking that such heavy rains had not been seen in twenty years.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband*, 63-66. The growing presence of African slaves on Curaçao led to the formation of a creole society on the island as well as two slave uprisings (1750-1751 and 1785), see: Hartog, *Curaçao*, 119, 125.

<sup>16</sup> The other Dutch colonies in the Guianas received 6,450 slaves (4.1%). An additional 16,150 slaves whose whereabouts are less-well documented were probably shipped directly to the Spanish-American mainland. For numbers and percentages, see: Den Heijer, “The West African Trade,” 161.

<sup>17</sup> Klooster quoted in Alison Games, “The Atlantic Framework of 17th-Century Colonization,” in *The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples*, ed. Stephan Palmié and Francisco A. Scarano (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2011), 200.

<sup>18</sup> “Letter from Johannes Heinsius,” March 24, 1679, ZA, inv. nr. 2035.317/318.

While the vast majority of ships leaving West Africa sailed towards the circum-Caribbean, a few did arrive in New Netherland beginning soon after the colony's establishment. Though, the bulk of slaves only began arriving after Kieft's War ended in 1645 and as the colony transitioned from a trading post to a settlement colony.<sup>19</sup> In 1654, the *Witte Paert* (White Horse) arrived in New Netherland with an unspecified number of slaves onboard. In 1664, the *Gideon*, another Company ship, arrived carrying 290 slaves. Additional slaves arrived via Curaçao after 1658, though the numbers were marginal compared to those arriving in the circum-Caribbean. Private individuals seemed to have little interest in or little money to purchase slaves. Based on a 1665 New York taxation list, only 30 of the 254 individuals listed owned slaves.<sup>20</sup> The majority of New Netherlands' slaves belonged to the Company itself and completed menial tasks including building and repairing forts, chopping wood, cultivating land, and harvesting crops. New Netherlanders, however, often complained about the inferior disposition of slaves who disembarked in their colony in comparison to slaves destined for the Caribbean.<sup>21</sup>

The transition from the First to Second Dutch West India Company is marked by its increasing reliance upon African slaves. The Americas' declining Native population, the result of European disease and violence, has often been portrayed as the prime mover of this transition. Indigenous resistance movements and extreme weather events, however, also played a part.

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<sup>19</sup> Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 328.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 380-382.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 380-382; Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 25. For more on African slaves in New Netherland, see: Romney, *New Netherland Connections*, 191-244.

## 15. Global Comparisons

The three indigenous resistances movements at the core of this work took place in the Americas. Extreme weather events, however, struck regions across the globe during the 1630s and 1640s. Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas all experienced extreme weather events that caused crop failures, famine, and societal instability. Violent conflict emerged as a common theme in nearly every case. The context of each case, however, was unique. Extreme weather events expressed themselves in varying forms. Cultural, economic, political, and agro-ecological conditions facilitated the responses of individuals. Accordingly, Dutch-indigenous conflicts were unique compared to other colonial enterprises that formed in the early modern Atlantic and across the globe. Yet, in other ways, local repercussions of the seventeenth century's extreme weather, regardless of how it expressed itself, showed striking global similarities as communities and individuals fought over scarce subsistence resources, battled hunger, and resisted newly-arriving migrants whether they be Manchu in China or slave-traders in Africa or Europeans in the Americas.

Throughout Eurasia, from Ireland in the West to China in the East, the seventeenth century witnessed an unprecedented level and frequency of state breakdown, popular revolt, and violence. Historians have long debated the causes of this “general crisis.”<sup>22</sup> This debate, which can be traced as far back as the 1950s, splintered in the 1950s as various proponents fought for their specific schools of thought. Each side ascribed and interpreted the ills of the seventeenth century to a bevy of causes: political, economic, or social. Each interpretation sought to understand how Europe and the West rose to such prominence beginning in the late seventeenth

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<sup>22</sup> For an introduction to this debate, see: J. H. Elliott, “The General Crisis in Retrospect: A Debate Without End,” in *Early Modern Europe: From Crisis to Stability*, ed. Philip Benedict and Myron P. Guttman (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 31-51.



century and throughout the eighteenth.<sup>23</sup> Most recently, Geoffrey Parker used the growing preponderance of historical climate data to place this “age of crisis” within a climatological framework of sporadic, episodic, and long-lasting extreme weather events.<sup>24</sup>

Most prominently in Europe, the early seventeenth century bore witness to the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) that split Europe roughly between Catholic and Protestant forces. Spain, in control of the Iberian Peninsula under a dynastic union of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns (1580-1640), found itself the primary target at the center of the Thirty Years’ War. As such, it tried desperately and often ruthlessly to defend an empire that included the Iberian Peninsula, the city-states of Lombardy, Naples, and Sicily in Italy, and its colonies in the Americas, Philippines, Asia, and Africa.

The Thirty Years’ War also absorbed the waning years of the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648). Over time, though, the struggle between Spain and the burgeoning Republic increasingly focused on the Americas. The Dutch West India Company temporarily seized Portuguese-claimed Bahia from 1624 to 1625, gained control of Brazil from 1630 to 1654, later seized São Jorge de Minha in West Africa, and blockaded Portuguese ships from entering Goa, India. The Dutch Republic often justified these actions by proclaiming themselves the liberators of America’s indigenous populations against shared Spanish foes. Yet, in reality the Dutch continued a ruthless colonial policy towards indigenous peoples first begun by preceding European powers.<sup>25</sup>

For Spain’s part, defending itself against multiple fronts in Europe and the Americas required a steady stream of resources, wealth, and people. Unfortunately for Spain’s Philip IV and his chief minister Don Gaspar de Guzmán, count of Olivares, extreme weather struck just as

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<sup>23</sup> For a review of General Crisis literature, see Jonathan Dewald, “Crisis, Chronology, and the Shape of European Social History,” *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (October 1, 2008): 1031–52.

<sup>24</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*; Parker, “Crisis and Catastrophe,” 1053-1079.

<sup>25</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 264; Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*.

they worked to assemble and maintain a steady flow of men and supplies. Seville, Spain drowned under record-breaking water levels between 1626 and 1627 and drought parched the Iberian Peninsula's soils between 1630 and 1631. Bad weather then led to wide-spread food shortages, spikes in wheat prices, precipitous drops in tithes, as well as famine, hunger, death, and rebellion.<sup>26</sup> Despite the wide-spread climate-induced shortages, Olivares refused to let up his demands on Spaniards and Portuguese for taxes, personnel, and food rationing. The demands weighted heavy on the Portuguese and by the end of the summer of 1637, approximately 60 places in southern Portugal were in open rebellion of the Spanish crown. Olivares quickly suspended several new taxes and nothing much came of the rebellions.<sup>27</sup> The rebellions did, however, provide context and motivation for Portugal's ongoing struggle to cast off the Spanish Crown – a struggle that began in earnest in 1640 and ended successfully in 1668 thanks in large measure to the climate-induced vulnerabilities within Spain, its overstretched military, and popular revolts throughout Spain.

Olivares demanded similar concessions from the people of Catalonia. Here too, however, climate had stretched vulnerable populations to the edge. Catalonia had suffered a paltry harvest in 1639, followed by a year of drought “so intense that the authorities declared a special holiday to allow the entire population to make a pilgrimage to a local shrine to pray for water – one of only four such occasions recorded in the past five centuries.”<sup>28</sup> Unrelenting, Olivares continued to press. Olivares needed food and board for his troops and compelled the people of Catalonia to provide. The situation came to a head on April 30, 1640, after peasants in the hamlet of Santa Coloma de Farners refused to comply and locked several royal officials into a local inn before

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<sup>26</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 254-257.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 257-264

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

setting it ablaze. Tensions quickly escalated and spread throughout the region, inciting rebellions in dozens of towns, and culminating with a siege in Barcelona. In many cities, revolting peasants ransacked royal officials' homes and burned churches to the ground.<sup>29</sup> Seven years later another series of revolts, known as the "Green Banner" revolts (1647-52), broke out after another failed harvest and spread throughout Andalusia in southern Spain.<sup>30</sup>

The Iberian example demonstrates the explosive power of bad policy mixed with climate-induced subsistence shortages. Drought cycles throughout the Iberian Peninsula weakened Spain's army as well as the resolve and commitment of its subjects. Olivares and by extension Philip IV failed to respond to the desperate pleas of peasants and instead steeled their resolve to defend Spain's vast global empire against foreign and domestic threats. Extreme weather, in other words, was not deterministic. Rather, it was Spain's response to extreme weather that created a violent and rebellious state.

Spain was not alone in experiencing extreme weather and political upheavals during the 1630s and 1640s. High tax demands to pay for foreign wars set off a string of peasant revolts in France between 1630 and 1653. A wet winter and stormy spring exacerbated the Croquets Revolt (1636). In Lower Normandy, salt-workers murdered dozens of tax collectors after receiving news of a renewed salt monopoly.<sup>31</sup> Russia went through the Russo-Polish war (1632-1634) and then a slew of Cossack uprisings (1630, 1635, 1637-38). In England, the Stuart Monarchy bore the weight of rebellion abroad including the Scottish Revolution (1637-1651) and Irish Rebellion (1641-1653) as well as at home during the English Civil War (1641-1646). The events in England were preceded by extreme weather events including floods (1629), harvest failures

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 267-272.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 280-283.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 296-300.

(1630), cold summers (1632), stormy springs (1633), drought (1634, 1636-37), and brutally cold, Thames-freezing winters (1635).<sup>32</sup> In Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, and on the other side of Eurasia, China was in the midst of a burgeoning, wide-spread crisis catalyzed by deteriorating weather.<sup>33</sup>

The transition from the Ming to Qing dynasty in China in 1644 exemplifies the role of human agency in the midst of shifting climate and extreme weather events in catalyzing long-lasting societal changes. Trouble for the Ming Dynasty began as early as 1615 when news of disaster, death, and starvation spread throughout China. Manchu living north of the Great Wall on the steppes of central Asia and surviving on a mixed economy steeped in trade, war booty, and agricultural production experienced similar climate-induced troubles. In 1618, the Manchu, led by Nurhaci (1559-1626), decided to alleviate their troubles by invading the province of Liaodong, known for its wheat and millet production. Their efforts were rewarded with a short boom in agricultural produce, but intense global cooling beginning in 1620 drove a steep and long-lasting increase in rice prices.

Concomitantly, the Ming faced a local uprising that required the reassignment of troops first deployed to stave off Manchurian invasions in the north. The White Lotus, a Buddhist sect in the Shandong province, challenged the Ming dynasty in 1622. Leaders of the movement declared a new imperial dynasty and, perhaps more tellingly, cut off the flow of rice along the Grand Canal – a move that created food shortages in Beijing. The Ming succeeding in crushing the growing rebellion, but it came at the cost of China's control of Liaodong.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 330; Geoffrey Parker, "Crisis and Catastrophe: The Global Crisis of the Seventeenth Century Reconsidered," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 4 (October 2008): 1053–79.

<sup>33</sup> Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*.

The impact of extreme weather is ultimately tied to the ability and willingness of governments and societies to respond to climate's threats. In 1627, this power came to rest in the hands of the 16-year-old Chongzhen, who ascended to the throne after his half-brother, the Tianqi emperor, died. The optimistically ambitious and naïve Chongzhen emperor quickly went to work to solve what historian Geoffrey Parker has identified as three of Ming China's central problems: an inadequate fiscal system, a weak military, and an ineffective imperial leadership. Chongzhen ultimately proved unable to overcome the deeply ingrained factions that divided the bureaucracy and instead created additional discord. It was into this political instability that extreme weather descended.

The first signs of prolonged climatic instability emerged in 1628 when drought struck the provinces of Shaanxi and Shanxi followed the next year by similar drought conditions in Manchuria. Heavy snow then fell back-to-back in the Guangxi and Guangdong provinces in 1633 and 1634, followed by extreme cold in 1636. The worst drought recorded in five centuries desiccated the growing fields of northern China in 1640. Crops then failed in 1633, 1634, 1635, 1638, and 1640.<sup>34</sup> Subsequent famines devastated Chinese subjects in 1636, 1637, 1639, and 1640. Petitions demanded relief from roaming bandits, hunger, and high taxes, but relief never came. The Ming dynasty diverted its resources to the north in order to curtail the Manchu's advances.

The Manchu's Great Enterprise, led by Hong Taji began in 1627 to challenge Chinese supremacy but by the 1630s the Manchus' desperate need for food drove the invasions. Cool and

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<sup>34</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 125; Brooke, *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 439. The drier conditions that correlate to the "Ming Drought" in China during the years 1636, 1637, 1639, and 1640 seem to be consistent with La Niña conditions which, according to historical climatologists Hui Gao and Song Yang, tend to occur during winter months, see: Hui Gao and Song Yang, "A Severe Drought Event in Northern China in Winter 2008–2009 and the Possible Influences of La Niña and Tibetan Plateau," *Journal of Geophysical Research* 114, no. D24 (December 22, 2009).

wet weather in Manchuria ruined harvests during the 1630s and left Hong Taji with little alternative but to seek relief via invasion – a resilience strategy in its own right. Hong Taji ordered raids into both China and Korea, but neither delivered more than short term relief. Rapidly eroding conditions in Ming China, however, created a moment of opportunity for the Manchu to seize complete control over their southern enemies. In China, high taxes, diminished silver supply, Japanese trade restrictions, and the threat of Manchu invasion exacerbated climate-induced harvest failures by the early 1640s. Collectively, these factors fostered ill will towards the Chongzheng emperor and made China vulnerable to internal revolt. China's citizenry expressed their discontent in rent strikes, food riots, and the formation of roving bandits. Li Zicheng, a disenchanted former official of the courier service, now known as the Dashing Prince, emerged as a formidable leader of the roving bandits and moved quickly to form a new, separate state (*Da Shun*).

The Chongzheng emperor was hemmed in. He faced an internal threat from the Dashing Prince in the south and an external threat from the Manchu in the north. In response to both, the Chongzheng emperor placed his fate in the hands of General Wu Sangui who commanded China's only formidable army. The emperor decided to recall the army from the Great Wall and regroup in Beijing to defend the capital at all costs. Wu's army did not move fast enough. On April 23, 1644, Li Zicheng's army stood at the doors of Beijing, a capital city defended by an unpaid, unfed, and weak militia. Chongzheng realized he had little hope of succeeding against Zicheng's army and so retired to the palace garden, wrote a short epitaph, and hanged himself.

In the aftermath of Chongzheng's suicide, China experienced continued political and societal instability due in part to changing climate. Li consolidated control over China into the short-lived Shun dynasty but failed to defeat the combined forces of Wu. Wu had retreated north

to the Great Wall to lead the last remnants of the Ming dynasty and the Grand Army of the Manchu, with whom Wu was forced to ally. The combined force of Wu and the Manchu defeated Li's army in 1644 and thereafter quickly went about establishing a short-lived shared dynasty. The Manchu soon consolidated their power, took full control of China, and established the Qing dynasty in 1644.<sup>35</sup>

Droughts and harsh winters alone did not cause the fall of the Ming dynasty nor the rise of the Qing dynasty. However, extreme weather did catalyze the movements and motives that ended with the Ming-Qing transition. Harvest failures throughout East Asia between 1630 and 1641, resulted in starvation and famine that led Manchu and Chinese farmers to deploy the resilience strategies available to them to demand and acquire much needed famine relief. The Manchu chose to respond to changing climate by invading China. Chinese farmers and intellectuals chose to participate in food riots, rent strikes, or the army of Li Zicheng. Both cases resulted in unprecedented violence.

China and Manchuria were not alone in Asia when it came to experiencing societal disruptions in the 1630s and 1640s. They were joined by Japan and India. In Japan, "the largest rural rebellion in modern Japanese history broke out on the southern island of Kyushu" between 1637 and 1638 following several years of below average harvests.<sup>36</sup> In India, foreshadowing the devastating famine associated with an 1877-1879 El Niño event, monsoon failures in 1628, 1629, 1630, and 1631 led to drought, starvation, and a famine that left nearly one million dead in the Ahmadnagar district alone. Politically, drought and famine, at least in the estimation of Richard Grove and John Chappell, destabilized the Mughal empire and might have catalyzed the rise of

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<sup>35</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, ch. 5.

<sup>36</sup> For Japan, see Parker, *Global Crisis*, xxii.

the Marathas.<sup>37</sup> Strikingly similar turns of events were unfolding a half-world away in the Americas.

Strong parallels exist between climate, colonialism, and conflict outside the realms of the Dutch Atlantic.<sup>38</sup> Similar to how shifting trade alliances, disease epidemics, Indian confinement to mission villages, and forced labor drove Dutch-indigenous conflict, they also drove violent episodes between indigenous peoples and the English and Spanish. “Cold spells, droughts, and storms...wrought particular havoc on English planting,” according to historian Katherine Grandjean, and led to “rather poisonous effects on English encounters with Indians.” Grandjean adds that “food scarcity directly preceded much of the violence that characterized English colonization.” The impacts of these three horsemen were nearly universal in the Americas. Extreme weather shaped not just indigenous peoples’ encounters with the English, but nearly all Europeans with whom they interacted. In New Spain, repeated Apache raids struck Christian mission communities between 1629 and 1641, attacks that corresponded with drought-induced famines and a lethal smallpox epidemic.<sup>39</sup> And in New England, extreme weather and colonial violence went hand-in-hand during the Pequot War (1636-1638).<sup>40</sup>

The Pequot War offers the best comparison for understanding the events that later unfolded in New Netherland due to its geographic proximity, climatic similarities, shared cast of characters, and extent of violence. At Fort Mystic, hundreds of Pequot men, women, and children were killed after their encampment was surrounded by combined force of English soldiers under the command of Captain’s John Mason and John Underhill and a cadre of

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<sup>37</sup> For seventeenth-century India, see: Grove and Chappell, *El Niño: History and Crisis*, 15; for nineteenth-century India, see: Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*.

<sup>38</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, ch. 15; Brooke, *Climate Change*, 429-438.

<sup>39</sup> Parker, *Global Crisis*, 463.

<sup>40</sup> Grandjean, “New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War,” 75.



Narragansetts and Mohegans. In an attempt to understand the importance and lethal nature of this war, historians have offered explanations ranging from English greed for land to Puritan conceptions of savagery to the complicated trade relationship between the Pequot, English, and Dutch.<sup>41</sup> According to Katherine Grandjean, however, extreme weather links the discovery of John Oldham's corpse in the summer of 1636 and the devastating war that followed. Two factors explain the importance of Oldham's death. First, the 1630s were difficult years for those living in New England. Wide-spread drought desiccated the agricultural fields of European colonists and Native Americans alike. In 1635, a strong hurricane followed by extreme frost and snow caused flash floods in New England, destroyed corn fields and homes, deteriorated already precarious weather conditions, and led to wide-spread food shortages. Secondly, Oldham was an important figure and played a crucial role in the provisioning of New England's various settlements. Oldham shuttled scarce provisions between New England colonies and negotiated corn purchases with indigenous groups including the Narragansett. The Connecticut government response to Oldham's death – he ordered an inventory of their corn supplies – is telling of the importance placed on Oldham's role in securing provisions.<sup>42</sup>

Oldham's death had been preceded a month early by the death of another English trader, William Hammond. A group of Natives killed Hammond while he was on a crucial food-supply run to Virginia and his boat, filled with goods he intended to trade for corn, shipwrecked on Long Island. Two years prior, yet another English trade, Captain John Stone, met a similar fate. These traders rendered services crucial to the survival of New England colonists. Hungry

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<sup>41</sup> Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Cave, *The Pequot War*; Mark Meuwese, "The Dutch Connection: New Netherland, the Pequots, and the Puritans in Southern New England, 1620–1638," 295–323; Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War," 75–100.

<sup>42</sup> Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War," 84–90.

colonists interpreted their deaths as a direct attack on their survival. As a result, the colonists were willing to go to great lengths not necessarily to avenge these deaths, but rather to ensure their own survival.<sup>43</sup>

Corn, just as it would a few years later in New Netherland, emerged as a key weapon of the Pequot War. “Some English,” describes Grandjean, “clamored for Indian corn, whereas others burned and destroyed it with abandon. Corn was everywhere stolen, fired, or dug up...” And to the victors went the corn. The earliest skirmishes of both the Pequot War and Kieft’s War in New Netherland can be summarized as corn raids aimed at either stealing or plundering corn, depending on whether it could be transported. In August 1636, for example, an English force burned a large amount of corn on Block Island after realizing they could not bring it back with them. The logic of this action was simple. “If English colonists did not have enough to eat, the soldiers ensured that neither would the island’s Indians.”<sup>44</sup>

North America’s importance to Europe’s colonial empires paled in comparison to the riches that could be wrought from the soils of Latin America and the Caribbean. The latent potential of riches these soils held, however, were susceptible to long and short-term shifts in the Caribbean’s water availability. Shifts in the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), which drives rainfall distribution throughout the southern and western reaches of the circum-Caribbean including northeast Brazil, the ABC (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao) islands, and much of Central America, manifested itself in significantly drier conditions throughout the circum-Caribbean beginning in the fifteenth century.<sup>45</sup> These earlier drier conditions catalyzed the Mayan Collapse, but were just the beginning of a long-term shift to regionally-drier conditions.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 92-94.

<sup>45</sup> The most common explanation for drier conditions in northeast Brazil during the Little Ice Age suggests responsibility lies with a southward shift of the ITCZ perhaps brought on by an increased meridional temperature

Drought, harvest failures, famine, and disease outbreaks were a common occurrence in the north of Mexico between 1540 and the 1690s. Georgina Endfield has tied these crises to periods of indigenous revolt. Corn-damaging drought and pests immediately preceded revolts in 1615 and a smallpox epidemic immediately preceded another revolt in 1645. Additional drought episodes and epidemics occurred in 1644, 1645, 1647, 1650, and 1652. Humans responded to each of these events via migration and conflict. In the 1670s, 1680s, and 1690s nomadic groups partially responded to drought, famine, and disease through increased raiding.<sup>46</sup>

The global conflicts of the 1630s and 1640s contextualize the indigenous resistance movements in Brazil, Curaçao, and the Hudson Valley. The climate-induced crises that struck the Dutch Atlantic were neither unique nor singular events. Indeed, this period was a pivot phase not just in climate history, but in global history as well.

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gradient in the North Atlantic. During austral winter (June - August) the ITCZ moves northward bringing rain to South America's northern coastline including Panama, northern Venezuela, and the ABC islands. During the boreal winter (December - February) the ITCZ moves southward bringing its nourishing, but potentially torrential rains to northeast Brazil. However, recent research suggests this might not be the case and instead cites the South American Summer Monsoon (SASM) as the driver of dry conditions. The authors of this study argue "a high-intensity South American Summer Monsoon amplified the South Atlantic Subtropical Anticyclone, which could have limited the southward shift of the ITCZ, leading to drier conditions in northeast Brazil, whereas during the Northern Hemisphere summer the ITCZ was shifted to the south, probably due to cold conditions in the Northern Hemisphere," see: Joao Claudio Cerqueira Viana et al., "A Late Holocene Paleoclimate Reconstruction from Boqueirao Lake Sediments, Northeastern Brazil," *Palaeogeography Palaeoclimatology Palaeoecology* 415 (2014): 117–26. For proxy evidence, see: Haug et al., "Southward Migration of the Intertropical Convergence Zone Through the Holocene," 1304–8; David A. Hodell et al., "Climate Change on the Yucatan Peninsula during the Little Ice Age," *Quaternary Research* 63, no. 2 (March 2005): 109–21. For Mayan Collapse, see Brian Fagan, *Floods, Famines, and Emperors: El Niño and the Fate of Civilizations* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), ch. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Georgina Endfield, *Climate and Society in Colonial Mexico*, 126–128; Parker, *Global Crisis*, 461–464.

## 16. Lessons from the Archives

In March of 2015, while attending a dinner of the Netherland-American Foundation at the Razmataz restaurant in Amsterdam, I was asked after giving a brief overview of my research to past Fulbrighters, why my research mattered. This is a question that all historians are asked to answer on a regular occasion. From an historiographical perspective, my answer is that highlighting the climatological and indigenous contexts of the First Dutch West India Company's collapse provides a more holistic understanding of colonial processes. Why, though, should a non-specialist or lay person care about a few small, geographically diffuse events that occurred some 400 years ago? I think the answer is simple. These indigenous resistance movements offer a cautionary tale of things to come. As the science of climate change becomes increasingly clear, nuanced, and alarming so do the physical manifestations of a warming Earth. Over the last several years that I have spent researching and writing, the signs are increasingly clear that something is amiss.

In late October 2012, Hurricane Sandy struck Manhattan and its surrounding boroughs flooding subway tunnels, eroding sandy beaches, and leaving a path of devastation in its wake. California and much of the west experienced one of the worst droughts in recorded history. Beginning in 2013, each subsequent year's average global temperature has surpassed the previous year's. For people living on the Marshall Islands, a string of nearly 1,000 islands collected around 29 coral atolls, rising sea levels are an everyday reality. There, sea levels have risen about a foot over the last 30 years due to strong global trade winds. The flooding has resulted in the salinization of water supplies, the overflow of sewage systems, and destruction of property.<sup>47</sup> Miami Beach, Florida, a small barrier island, has experienced increased flooding over

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<sup>47</sup> Coral Davenport and Josh Haner, "The Marshall Islands Are Disappearing," *The New York Times*, December 1, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/02/world/The-Marshall-Islands-Are-Disappearing.html>.

the last decade and has launched a program to install pumps and build higher roads to combat rising waters.<sup>48</sup> In January 2016, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development announced a \$48 million grant to relocate the inhabitants of Isle de Jean Charles in Louisiana, mostly members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe, to the mainland. The move came as a result of rising sea levels that have diminished the total surface area of the island. Many have referred to these soon-to-be-relocated indigenous peoples the United States' first 'climate refugees.'<sup>49</sup> Historically, however, these are but the first *modern* climate refugees here in the Americas.

For most people in the developed world, extreme weather events like droughts and flooding manifest themselves as inconsequential or nuisance-inducing events. Few in the developed world, in other words, have yet experienced extreme weather and climate change as a long-term problem.<sup>50</sup> In most cases, where climate rears its ugly head, the solution is to declare a state of natural disaster and throw money at the problem. However, in the developing world, most people lack the luxury of ignoring climate-induced ecological devastation. In 2011, Syria erupted as Arab Spring demonstrations raised questions about the country's future. The resulting civil war has made Syria a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism. Many scholars have pointed to the role of climate in inciting this violence. Between 2006 and 2009, the country fell into a prolonged drought that forced 1.5 million farmers to leave their failing farms in search of jobs

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<sup>48</sup> Ben Kirtman and Climate Modeling Expert, "As Waters Rise, Miami Beach Builds Higher Streets And Political Willpower," *NPR.org*, accessed June 6, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/05/10/476071206/as-waters-rise-miami-beach-builds-higher-streets-and-political-willpower>.

<sup>49</sup> Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson, "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees,'" *The New York Times*, May 2, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/03/us/resettling-the-first-american-climate-refugees.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Parenti documents several incidents of "climate-driven violence" in the modern age in Christian Parenti, *Tropic of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence* (New York: Nation Books, 2011).

and refuge in the country's major cities.<sup>51</sup> Once there, farmers and their families encountered refugees from Iraq who had also sought to leave behind a war-torn country. The ensuing problems of unemployment, civil war, and threats of Islamic fundamentalist launched an even greater refugee crisis. Thousands have since died after overcrowded boats filled with refugees seeking a better life in Europe capsized in the cold waters of the Mediterranean.

The Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis is but one example of the consequences of contemporary climate change. We are in the midst of an emerging crisis that will result in millions of additional climate refugees and bloody climate wars. The United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security estimates that approximately 50 million to 200 million subsistence farmers, fisherman, and others living on the edge of survival will be displaced by 2050.<sup>52</sup>

Nearly 400 years ago short-term episodes of extreme weather and long-term climate changes altered ecosystems, induced droughts and floods, and encouraged peoples to migrate in search of more fertile regions. Alone, these events needed not be violent or deadly. What made them so were the choices made by the individuals and institutions involved. Today, we as a global society have a choice as to how to respond to the looming threat of climate change. The past can teach us something about the consequences of those decisions.

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<sup>51</sup> Dagomar Degroot, "Is Climate Change Behind the Syrian Civil War?," *HistoricalClimatology.com*, July 8, 2015, <http://www.historicalclimatology.com/1/post/2015/07/is-climate-change-behind-the-syrian-civil-war.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Davenport and Robertson, "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees.'"

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